

THE MENTOR 84

THE MAGAZINE AHEAD OF IT'S TIME

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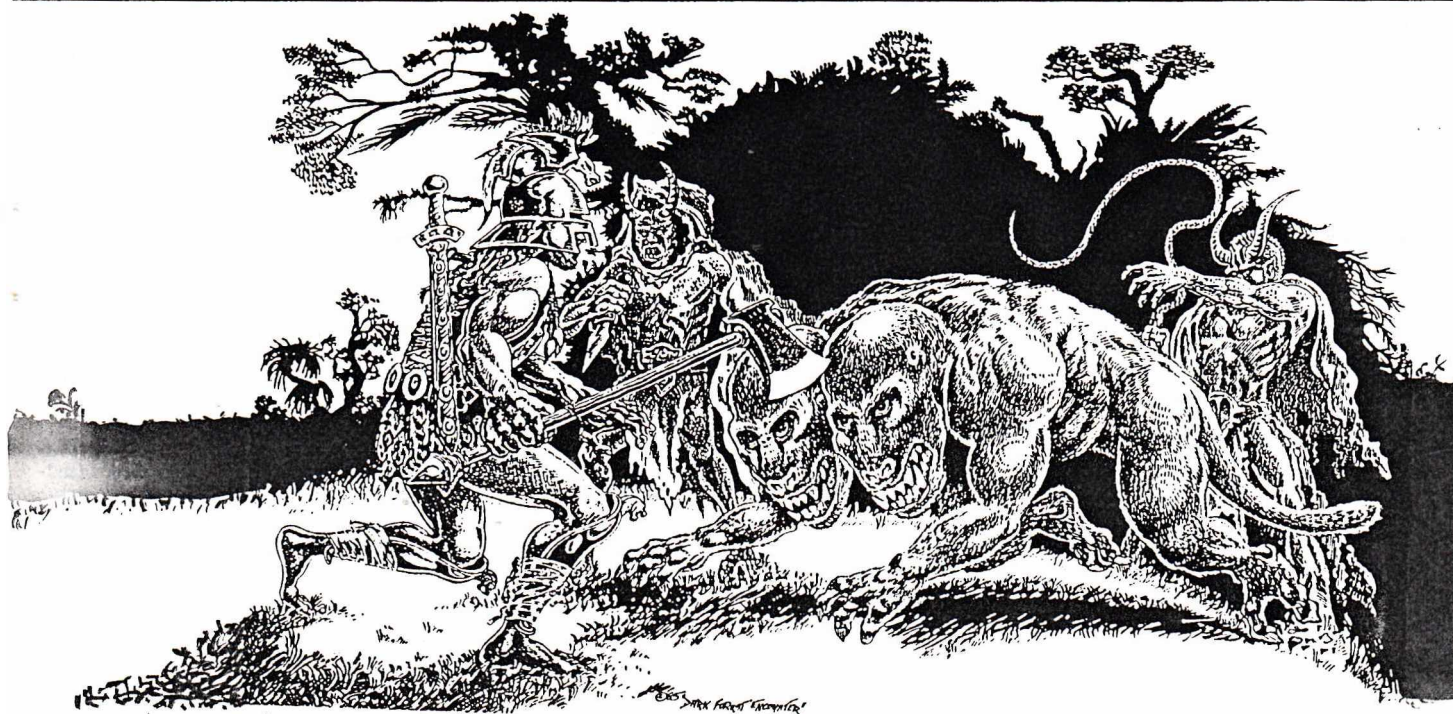
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THE EDITORIAL SLANT

by Ron Clarke

I REMEMBER

I remember the cheese of my childhood
And the bread that we cut with a knife,
The children who helped with the housework
And the man who went to work not the wife.

The cheese never needed the ice chest
The bread was crusty and hot,
The children always seemed happy
And the wife was content with her lot.

I remember the milk in the billy
With the lovely rich cream on the top,
And the dinner straight from the oven
And not from the frig in the shop

The kids were a lot more contented
They didn't need money for "Kicks",
But a game with their mates in the paddock
And sometimes the Saturday "Flicks".

I remember the shop on the corner
where a "Pennyworth" of lollies were sold,
Do you think I'm a bit too nostalgic
Or is it I'm just getting old.

- Anon.

For those reading the above - do *you* remember that long ago? I can't say I do, but I do just remember the days when the milk came around in a truck with the large steel cans like enormous milk bottles and you got your billy filled from it. And the "dunny man", of course. And dirt roads in the suburbs. And my grandfather's soft-topped Ford with running boards.

All this goes to show that times are a changing - and changing fast. Most of THE MENTOR's readers will remember when the community considered that women with children who went to work, leaving them in a creche, were not quite the right "motherly" types. Of course this was when Russia was supposed to have millions of kids in creches - BRAVE NEW WORLD was still in the distance and machines and nurses looking after babies and toddlers were a frightening future. And TV dinners were not nutritional and not good for growing families.

Well, that future is here now.

I've been thinking just how fast things are changing - things that are, like the creche thing, noticeable. There are other events that come and go in cycles - anti-war protesting is one of these. It's been happening in Australia since the Boer War. Then there was the question of race: "I do not think... that the doctrine of equality of man was really ever intended to include racial equality. There is that basic inequality. These races are, in comparison with white races - I think no one wants convincing of this fact - unequal and inferior... There is a deep set of differences and we see no prospect of its ever being effaced... Nothing we can do by cultivation, by refinement, or by anything else will make some races equal to others."

Yes, times they are a changing. And they are changing faster and faster. Think about it. Back in the early 1970s in Australia the morals of the nation were changing, catching up, one could say, with those of Europe and North America. Back then people were wondering what would happen when those who were protesting against the Establishment as they saw it grew out of their late teens

and early twenties and into positions of *real* power. What happened? Why, they *supported* the Establishment, which now is *them*. I've even noticed that those in the media are trying to say now that what happened in the sixties (and seventies), with the protests and moral changes, either did not happen as documented, or *was not really a good thing for society*. That is, the events and moral climate they supported - better deals for women, sexual enlightenment, the dropping of censorship, etc. were not good things. It'd make you laugh if it wasn't so serious.

Even with relatively open-government there are decisions and deals being made that will never come to light - because that would damage both major political parties. So don't think that you will ever see these - you can bet the media would not be silly enough to bring these to light.

Just how are these changes being directed. Are they? Politicians, media tycoons, businessmen, senior public servants are all playing their power games - and these will have some guiding influence. But what about the public itself - goes this giant amorphous entity somehow have a say in what happens to it? Or does it get directed by manipulators in various forms? Does it go where it doesn't want to go in the long run?

Part of this is answered by looking at Federal and State elections - it might take years, but sooner or later change happens, and it is usually for the better - mostly in Western civilisation. You can't tell me that the "common man" (or woman, or child) in Europe, North America and Australasia doesn't have it much better in life than they three centuries ago. And sooner or later the rest of the world will catch up - and either also get the benefits, or pull the rest of the world down to their economic level. What *that* means is that the Western World had better help them.

As to how fast things change - look how long it took European explorers to colonise the relatively empty lands of North and South America and Australia. It is nearly 25 years since the first moon landing - will humans be back in space in a couple of years, or will it take another fifty years? Whatever.... but change *is* accelerating and we have to be ready for those changes. Whether those reading SF now can keep up with those changes is another thing.

Well, after all my talk of printing THE MENTOR by offset, I've gone and sold the offset press to a Star Trek club and bought a Xerox 5026 photo-copier. As to whether this model will be able to keep up with the quantity of photocopying I'll be doing in one stint is something I'll be finding out in a week or so. What eventually persuaded me to buy the 5026 was the lack of space I'll have in the flat (the offset printing apparatus consisted of the ABDick, the platemaker and the fuser). I've figured out that it would, on the small print runs I do, take much just over half the time to photo-copy the zine as to offset it. And the cost should be compatible, but I won't know that until I've done an issue or two of TM and seen how far the toner goes... I had a 5017 delivered, but after the salesman offered the 5026 for not much extra, I decided on that model. At least I won't have printing ink under my finger-nails for a week or so after each issue.

I'm still having trouble keeping the size of TM down, several pieces of fiction had to be taken out and will be in next issue - Shane Dix's MEMORY, LAME and Robert Frew's HUNGER PAINS. Oh, the quote in paragraph four of this editorial is by Edmund Barton, Australia's first Prime Minister. - Ron.

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Contributions, if over 3 pages, preferred to be on an IBM 5¹/₄" or 3¹/₂" disc (DD or HD) otherwise typed, single or double spaced, preferably a good photocopy (and if you want it returned, please *type* your name and address) and include an SSAE! This doesn't refer to LoCs. Contributions are not paid; however they receive a free copy of the issue their contribution is in, and any future issues containing comments on their contribution.

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EDEN BOUND

by Louise Hollingberry

When we first saw the planet, it was turquoise and white, almost like home.

There were no major continents, the planet was covered by thousands of islands. We landed on the largest island, which looked like it had once been part of a series of active volcanoes, that had linked up through successive lava flows, to form a very curious shape. From above, if you squinted and used a lot of imagination, it looked almost like a giant caterpillar; a squashed caterpillar. The island we called Alpha, (the real naming would be done by the colonists, if they came) was surrounded by hundreds of similar islands. The whole area looked more like a lagoon system. In fact, the entire planet did.

We found an active flora system, thousands of unknown species to catalogue, name and study. The fauna was rarer. There were approximately fifty different species of bi-ped and quadruped animals, all of which were small in stature and apparent herbivores, except two: a cat-like animal with a motley green coat, that stood no more than a quarter of a metre tall and preyed on all the other smaller animals and a small dun coloured bi-ped, about the size of a housemouse. It hunted in packs of thirty or more and fed solely on the cat-like creature.

There were birds that fed mainly on grains, nectar, honey and insects. During our stay we only saw three types of insect. There were no 'mozzies' or fly-like insects to hassle us. The insects seemed to live on and off the plants and gave our teams a wide berth, often going out of their way to avoid us. We figured they didn't like our smell.

Our survey showed very little in the way of sea life, although the waters were surprisingly rich in plant life. There were only a few significantly deep areas in the seas, or more precisely canals, they weren't really large enough to be called seas. The currents were mild, nothing that would seriously interrupt the growth cycle of the plants.

This gave the water a sort of turquoise tint, that in some areas was positively bright green. Thankfully the surf was white, even though the water was a touch green. Plankton, on this planet, thrived everywhere and clung to anything it came in contact with. After a skinny-dip, it took hours to wash all the green off, and led to some pretty gross jokes.

The plant had a circular orbit around its yellow sun, and its poles were at right angles to the sun. This was the reason the plants thrived, so the botanists said. It had a constant temperature all year around. The volcanoes were the only apparent fly in this paradise. Spewing forth with monotonous irregularity. One hundred and two active volcanoes spread all over the planet, thankfully none near Alpha.

The climate at Alpha varied little and the meteorologists estimated that it had been a beautiful 28°C for nearly 300 years. Of course the closer to the poles, the colder it got and the closer to the equator, the warmer it got. Even the storms were mild. We could find no indication of there ever being any wild storms on or near Alpha.

Absolute paradise.

Our policy was to establish camp sites on rocky outcrops, until the native flora and fauna had been studied.

Base One stood on a cliff above two virgin white beaches. Directly behind us was a grass meadow and then an extinct volcanic mountain. Its sides covered in a dense undergrowth and tall trees that were home to a tree climbing animal that somehow resembled a pig with large sharp claws, only it was striped in two shades of green and was only 30 cm tall. It also made a sharp high pitched call at sunrise and sunset, that could set the hair on the back of your neck on

end. It fed of the fruit of the trees, a rather tasty little nut-like thing with a squishy sweet centre.

Out of all the plants we found, the weirdest was one we nicknamed "Sticks".

Sticks could be found scattered over the entire planet, except the poles. Some in large clumps, others stood as silent sentinels, overlooking the sea or a river bed or occasionally near a forest. You never saw one by itself. They could grow to nearly two metres tall and the surrounding soil was always very fertile, good rich loam. They appeared to have no predators amongst the animals and only one of the insect species was ever observed near the Sticks. They were an odd plant.

I'm not sure how to explain what happened or why it happened. A lot of it has to do with the way our pre-colonisation ships are organised. The Company has its own special policy.

My ship is called *The Explorer XXII*. It is a misnomer, as we don't explore. We go to pre-explored "safe" solar systems, targeting all M class planets that have no known intelligent life forms, to find out if they are habitable and can be colonized.

The ship is divided into two distinct sections. I belong to section I. This section is made up of seven teams. My team is responsible for navigation, take-offs and landings and, because we handle navigation we get to choose the planets we investigate. Leadership of each team is on a rostered basis, usually changing at the beginning of each mission. This means we have an egalitarian form of leadership, most decisions are made by the team. It creates a "family" atmosphere that helps us get through those long space voyages. Team Leaders hold daily meetings that are mainly housekeeping. We run an extremely "tight" ship.

Section I is the permanent part of the ship. We are in charge until we land on the planet to be investigated, then we virtually become the "lackeys" of Section II. They are now in complete control. We do all the running around, from setting up base camps to collecting samples to keeping the place tidy.

Section II changes every mission and consists of all the experts and "oligists" required to evaluate the planet. It might help if you understand that there is a lot of money to be made in colonization and that research was governed by the Company's profit margin. Section II never went into things too deeply, that was left for the colonists, if they came.

On this occasion, I was the rostered team leader. I was coming back from establishing Base Camp Two on a rocky outcrop we'd found on the other side of the island. It was next to a pale pink beach. All the other beaches we'd surveyed had been pristine white but this one was pale pink. The "Geos" said it was because there was a huge iron deposit underneath and the iron was staining the sand. But I couldn't understand why it was only under that beach and nowhere else and why the sand was uniformly pink. It didn't look stained.

Anyway, as I said, I was on my way back and I'd just reached the meadow behind the base, when I saw it. A Stick, just one solitary Stick. Funny how no-one had noticed it before, as it was nearly two metres tall and in full view of the camp-site.

It stood in the meadow surrounded by the common sort of grasses that were all over the planet, all waving in the slight afternoon breeze. Their small scarlet and rose coloured flowers (if you could call them that, seeing they had no petals, carpels or stamens and were just a coloured blob at the top or in the middle of a blade of grass) bobbing along as if to a different tune.

The Stick was a long, slender, furry and sticky to touch. Its top was a cloud of fronds. Although I'd seen hundreds of them I'd never been this close to one, so I took the opportunity to examine it. I leaned down and smelt a faint stringent, yet somehow pleasant, odour that I could not identify. I was surprised at how delicate it felt and how sensual the feel of the stalk was as I rubbed my fingers against it. As the plant had been given the all-clear - it was similar to species of reeds found on a couple of distant planets, including Earth and I enjoyed the smell and feel of it, I decided to take it with me, so I bent and then attempted to break it off. As I did, I stung my fingers on hidden thorns. (The medicos said the swelling and pain would go and that no damage was done.)

After that, it was no longer pliable to touch - it was hard and unyielding. The soft fur had turned into solid spikes that seemed to

mat around the stem as if to protect it. But the thing I noticed most was the change in odour. It became pungent and sickly, like rotting meat. I found myself backing away, wanting to vomit.

The botanists had a field day with this new information. They had classified it as a harmless form of reed, so they decided to dig it up, as a specimen, with its entire root system. But the deeper they dug, the more concentrated the roots became. And they had to wear breathing masks - the smell was unbearable. They never did find the bottom of the plant. What they did find was a point where all the roots broke off in clean breaks. It was almost impossible to break them anywhere else. If they managed to break one, the plant root would bleed copiously and literally require bandaging before it would stop. It was really very funny. The whole plant would droop as its bright yellow sap drained onto the dirt. When the bandage was applied it stopped but it took the plant a couple of days to recover its "bounce". After it was potted, the stench seemed to die away and three days later it could be taken inside. When they had completed all their tests on it, it became a potted plant on a bench near the conference room.

I avoided it.

In fact I avoided all Sticks. I would get nervous even thinking about them and the sight of a bunch really turned my stomach, not to mention that my fingers would start to hurt, to sting, to burn again. The doc said it was all in my mind. The botanists said that Sticks aren't intelligent. Yet, whenever I was forced to go near them, no matter where on the planet, the odour returned, that foul, fetid stench and the thorn-like hairs would appear. The mist-like fronds extending from the top would fall back and retract into the bulbous top and then melt into the stem giving it a wedge like appearance. And my fingers would start to sting, throb and burn. I'd want to vomit.

When we pooled our information, to decide whether or not to open the planet for colonization, my doubts were overridden. It was a harmless plant with interesting, self protecting behaviours, nothing more and I was becoming paranoid and perhaps I needed a vacation. The team agreed that although there was abundant life, intelligent beings had not evolved on this planet and the life present was non-threatening. My fears and doubts were dismissed as meaningless against the Company's investment. There was no bar to colonization.

We sent our report and began the tedious task of dismantling our camp. I tried very hard to get the potted Stick left behind. The botanists wanted it taken along as a specimen cum mascot, but there was no way I was getting on board with that thing and the thought of staying behind, on the planet, with millions of Sticks was too gruesome to contemplate. It took hours of heated debate before a compromise was reached. Just before we sealed for the take-off they would place it in a life support capsule in the storage space at the base of the ship. The botanists would take it with them when we docked at the Crystal City Space Station. I would then be off to another solar system while they would spend the next few years studying and classifying all the samples. But I wasn't happy.

The longer we stayed on the planet, the greater my fear of Sticks became. I was no good at hiding it. I scanned the skies hourly for the colonists and remained close to Base One. Eventually I refused to go out of the compound. I didn't even protest when I heard my teammates taunt me with "sticks and stones, sticks and stones". I didn't care. I felt they, the Sticks, were watching me, that they knew what I was doing... I spent my time re-calibrating our trip home, trying to find the quickest way out.

Finally the colony ships slipped into orbit and we formally handed over the planet to them. I insisted that in the warnings about the alien life forms, the Sticks were given special mention, but I don't think they paid them any extra attention. I suppose they'd heard the usual "alien-life-form-be-careful" spiel a couple of hundred times by then, but it's very important as we're not on the planet long enough to pick out all the dangers.

We watched them establish their camp around our broken one. They named the planet Flora, for obvious reasons and Altha became Eden, after their main ship *The Eden Bound*. Nothing very original, but I didn't care; I'd be leaving soon.

Leaving a planet is a very ritualised procedure. One I've done more times than I care to remember and this time was no exception. After everything is boarded and checked, the crew and

teams take their places and exactly 12 hours before the take-off the ship is sealed and life support is turned on. The theory being that if something does go wrong it'll happen there and not in space. Personally I've always thought of this practise as a great waste of time and energy.

I gave the order to seal and switched on life support, checked that everything was "A. O. Kay" before stifling a yawn and headed towards the galley. My second-in-command was having lunch and I needed to discuss some course changes I was thinking of making, but by the time I'd reached the galley I could hardly keep my eyes open and I was swaying on my feet.

I woke up in sick bay, my fingers burning red and inflamed. The pain was excruciating. The doc packed them in cooling pads, then they gave me a shot of something that knocked me out... I woke up in a haze of red lights and blaring sirens. I was in the ship's storage area and in my hands was the potted Stick. Someone yelled something and I turned to the source of the sound and blackness...

I woke up in sick bay.

Our take-off had been aborted. Apparently I'd broken the seal. My fingers no longer burnt but in the corner of the room was the Stick. I threw up over one of the security guards standing too close to my bed.

Deep cell cultures, taken from my fingers, had revealed thousands of microscopic spores imbedded and multiplying in my cell tissues. No-one understood why they hadn't shown up before but thankfully they were able to remove them and as I settled down after being spoon-fed they told me what had happened.

Somehow, with enough sedative in me to put an elephant to sleep, I had, while unconscious, managed to leave sick bay, break the seal, thus setting off the sirens, enter the storage area and release the Stick (that's when I woke), to be hastily sedated again. This time I had two security guards to watch me and as I lay unconscious, they removed the spores. The Stick, in a new life support capsule, was left near me, because I couldn't settle if they took it away. After the spores were removed they found I no longer needed it, but no-one had bothered to remove it. The first thing I'd noticed, when I was strong enough to sit up, was that I was no longer afraid of it. On my first trip outside I purposely approached a clump of Sticks. Nothing happened. The removal of the spores meant that they could no longer distinguish me from other humans.

Headquarters had "requested" we stay on for a further six months so that the botanists could study the Sticks and come up with ways of treating the "infection" as they were now calling it. The colonists had refused to move, after all, they reasoned, Earth had plants you couldn't touch. But Earth didn't have plants that could control you or move your unconscious body.

Two weeks after I had recovered I watched some heavily suited people plough a field of Sticks into the ground and saw the yellow sap spill out of the open wounds. I watched until the stench became unbearable. It still was, two months later. The colonists gave up any attempts to destroy the Sticks. They decided to learn to live around them. Someone tried growing wheat and corn amongst them. It seemed to work in small doses, but harvesting was hell. Fortunately I wasn't there to see it or smell it.

This time no-one broke the seal and take off was right on schedule. The potted Stick remained safely in our storage area 'til we reached Crystal City, where we unloaded it along with our field teams. I was never so pleased to see the tail end of anything as much as I was to get rid of that Stick.

After our usual shore leave we picked up a fresh field team and headed for another colonizable planet. The scout teams had given me several to choose from. I chose the one furthest away and put "Flora" firmly out of my mind. Until, a few years later, when, in the team we picked up for our next mission, there were two from the "Flora" trip. A wife and husband, although if I recall, they were courting then. They had kept in touch with some of the colonists until a couple of months ago, so they were able to tell me how the colony was going.

They said that "Flora" was flourishing (if you'll excuse the pun). The colonists now called themselves "Forians" and had learnt, like all the other animals on the planet, to leave the Sticks alone. They were concentrating on exporting the native fruits and vegetables. Curiously, they had also given up trying to remove the plankton from

themselves after swimming and most were now a slimy mouldy green colour, that according to the wife, took a great deal of getting used to. She said the people were beginning to resemble moving plants, as the plankton, with frequent dips in the seas, grew on them. They also said that the colonists were slowly isolating themselves from the rest of the galactic community and it was now almost impossible to get a visitor's pass or take up residence. The potted Stick had somehow managed to get itself planted in Crystal City's largest garden and had begun to clump. The thought of that plant growing in another part of the galaxy sent shivers down my spine. But I shook them off. It wasn't my problem. My 15 year contract would be up after this mission and I want to take my children to Earth.

But - green people? It was an intriguing thought.

No, I'd never go back to that planet. I still remember the incredible relief I felt when we lifted off.

But - green people like planets that move...?

No, I never want to see another Stick as long as I live. There's no way I'd go back.

ooooo

POETRY, TOO: 1

FINAL THOUGHTS

Shining points of light,
In the black velvet of space.
Freedom unimaginable is felt,
Akin to strolling through eternity.

My vessel drifts beyond my reach,
My home for all these years.
A new-found freedom awaits me,
That was beyond its offering.

The hiss of life has faded,
I no longer hear its tone.
My vision of the heavens begins to alter,
As my mind prepares to leave its present reality.

What lies ahead?
I do not know.
I face it without fear.

And so...
My final thoughts...
Come to an end....

- Trent Jamieson.

DO POETS CREATE PURGATORY?

What if they wish us not to sing?
Those ghosts of olden times?
Consider our carefully crafted lines
Cruel cages of cold iron rimes?
Spirit traps entangling
Souls who wish only to fade
And not to dwell where the light shines
But to seek only quiet shade
And (in) to oblivion blend and belong
Preferring Silence to our praise song?

- Julie Vaux

SIGMA OCTANTIS

Southern polar star, a whisper
Even amidst this night so clear,
What if you were lunar large bright?
A true radiance loudly obvious
Sending another world's summer light?
But no! you're so rarely luminous,
We must strain our sight to see you
Amidst summer night's shadow blue,
The smoke of a thousand thousand
Solar fires condensed to darkness,
Amongst which, a diamond in sand,
A flicker of light lost in vastness
You struggle yet shine, one small light,
Bringing slender hope to the night.

- Julie Vaux

GHOST NET.

Creatures stir in the viscous night
while death approaches out of sight.
It hangs like a shadow in the waters deep,
collecting all kinds though few it seeks.
Lost by its holder, it sweeps the seas,
misaid in the ocean like sugar in tea.
Softly it eddies in the gentle tides.
Roughly it swirls in the storms it rides.
Hundreds rot in the tangled mess,
the ever-reaching, entwining, tortured unrest.
The guise of an ocean plant it beguiles,
as it drifts, pursues, and from the depths, it riles.
Then I too am trapped, caught in its web.
I flap and I flounder, then I too am dead.

- Robert Frew

SWEET SEVENTEEN AND NEVER BEEN KISSED.

In the orchard
under the stars,
I have the kind of company
I never had before.
The creature I came here with
appeared to be human,
but my hands feel a scaly back,
and stiff fur pricks my chest.
A hooked beak tears at my mouth
destroying its sweetness.
Lifeless, I am encircled by claws.
I submit
believing I am doomed.

- Cecelia Drewer

"IF YOU'RE SO SMART WHY AIN'T YOU RIGHT?"

They graze in peace
space shared with comet herd
think words

light patterns long
as tails their beasts grew nor ever
kill one

- Steve Sneyd

CAPTAIN CONDOR: SPACE HERO IN SEARCH OF AN ARTIST

by Andrew Darlington

The launch of EAGLE, immaculately timed for the dawn of the new decade, made Dan Dare an overnight national figure; smashing the bounds of space, time and sales figures with a circulation nudging the million - a peak unequalled by a juvenile magazine before or since. Such success could hardly escape the notice of rival publishers. In his garish full-colour wake Space Hero Jet Morgan also reached a countrywide audience, this time through three BBC Light Programme radio serials, from whence Morgan graduated to strip form across the center pages of EXPRESS (from #84, 28 April 1956). But without such large-scale media tie-ins a third Science Fiction based strip - CAPTAIN CONDOR, became a comics cult that ran for twelve years, and at its best rivalled both Dare and Morgan in terms of story quality and popularity. Although scripted exclusively by the astonishingly prolific Frank S. Pepper, its wide diversity of artists employed some of Britain's most technically skilled and imaginative pens - Brian Lewis whose colour plates gave NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY some of their most stunning eye-grabbing covers, Keith Watson who trained with the Frank Hampson team and went on to illuminate Dan Dare single-handed, and John Gillat whose work ranged from the superior futures of JET-ACE LOGAN to Redskin Wrestler JOHNNY COUGAR, through to STRIKER for today's DAILY MIRROR. For their Condors they charged their nibs with the magic ink of shiny fantastic sense of wonder. But - such names excepted, the quest for the ideal visualiser was the one mission Condor never consistently pulled off.

Fleetway Publications counter-attack to Hulton's EAGLE came in two instalments. TIGER was designed to be a sports-based picture paper, and for the cover of the debut issue (11 September 1954) Frank Pepper created ROY OF THE ROVERS, a strip that continues today in its own eponymous magazine as well as in serials on the pages of a daily newspaper. TIGER's companion title, LION, was to be a more generally adventure-orientated comic with traditional school yarns (SANDY DEANS FIRST TERM) combined with E. George Cowan's more offbeat JUNGLE ROBOT strip introducing the long-running Robot Archie sagas. But, after the drabness of war and rationing, the lure of brighter tomorrows and the vivid realms of space it was to inhabit was the 1950's wonder drug. And for the cover of LION that same Frank Pepper was commissioned to create a new Space Hero.

"Reg Eves (editor) had no interest in Science Fiction, had never run any in any of his papers, and had never read any", Pepper told a GOLDEN EYE interview. "But I understand that he was under orders from the 'front office' to put a Space Hero on the cover as a competitor to Dan Dare. 'Do what you like Frank', he said, 'I don't know anything about it.'". Pepper was already a well-respected writer for the juvenile field - he'd churned out text stories featuring World War II air-ace ROCKFIST ROGAN every week since October 1938, and would continue to do so, but he had little SF experience. Nevertheless the plot outline he conjured was impressive, and it took Captain Condor through his first hundred-plus issues, and the linked cycle of his first five long adventures.

"When I was given the job," Pepper told me, "I felt that our juvenile readers could be very unsophisticated as far as science fiction was concerned. It was necessary to give them a story with

strong elements to which they could relate - themes they already knew. I therefore chose the one about the unjustly imprisoned hero who escapes from prison and becomes an outlaw. But instead of escaping from Alcatraz or Devil's Island, I simply pushed the prison into space". The year is 3000 AD. The solar system and its inhabited worlds are ruled by the tyrannical Dictator of the Planets. Condor - a rebel against the regime, is exiled to the uranium mines of Titan. He escapes to Zor, "the unknown moon", from where he organises the underground resistance group that eventually returns to liberate the Earth. Despite the obvious potential of the blueprint there were doubts until the very last moment whether Captain Condor would ever actually materialise in print. The obstacle was to locate an artist capable of illustrating such ideas. "In fact, the project came close to being abandoned at one time because of the difficulty of finding a man imaginative enough and capable of working fast enough to turn out a two-page set every week," he told me. "Then there's the problem of doing a script that would be within the capabilities of the artist. Ron Forbes, who was eventually chosen, had never done any science fiction before".

Eventually THE OUTLAW OF SPACE - carrying the by-line "By Frank S. Pepper", was splashed across the front and back covers of LION #1 dated 23 February 1952, drawn by Ron Forbes. In fairness, "LION's newsprint format lacked the solid colour depth of Hulton's gravure process, and whereas Dan Dare was famously produced by Frank Hampson's 'team' in special Dare studios operating from photos and detailed models, Forbes worked alone to a punishing schedule. Also, the general standard's of 50's SF art, even in the adult magazines of the period, was not high. Even so, the illustrations are disappointingly pedestrian. The Saturn system with its spectacular rings and moons offers incredibly dramatic possibilities to the imaginative eye. EAGLE's OPERATION SATURN saw Dare's personnel in a series of spectacular settings, John Gillat's art for JET-ACE LOGAN's trips to Saturn are equally rich - while Ron Turner's technically superb work for the relatively modest SPACE ACE story TERROR ON TITAN takes full advantage of the immense loom of Saturn's rings over the moon's horizon. But not Forbes. An occasional planetary doodle is affixed to the corner of the frame almost as an accidental afterthought. His characterisation is poor, Condor wears a Space Patrol peaked cap and is largely expressionless. His machines are unimaginative, and the lurking monsters that menace Condor (Kipplegriffs, Armorbats, Lizosaurs) are often comically inept. Yet when collectors gather to speak in hushed terms it is this SPACEMAN OF THE UNKNOWN MOON Captain Condor they usually refer to. The series was a huge success with related merchandising including a Captain Condor watch produced by Timex, on which Pepper had wisely established his copyright, and on which he drew royalties.

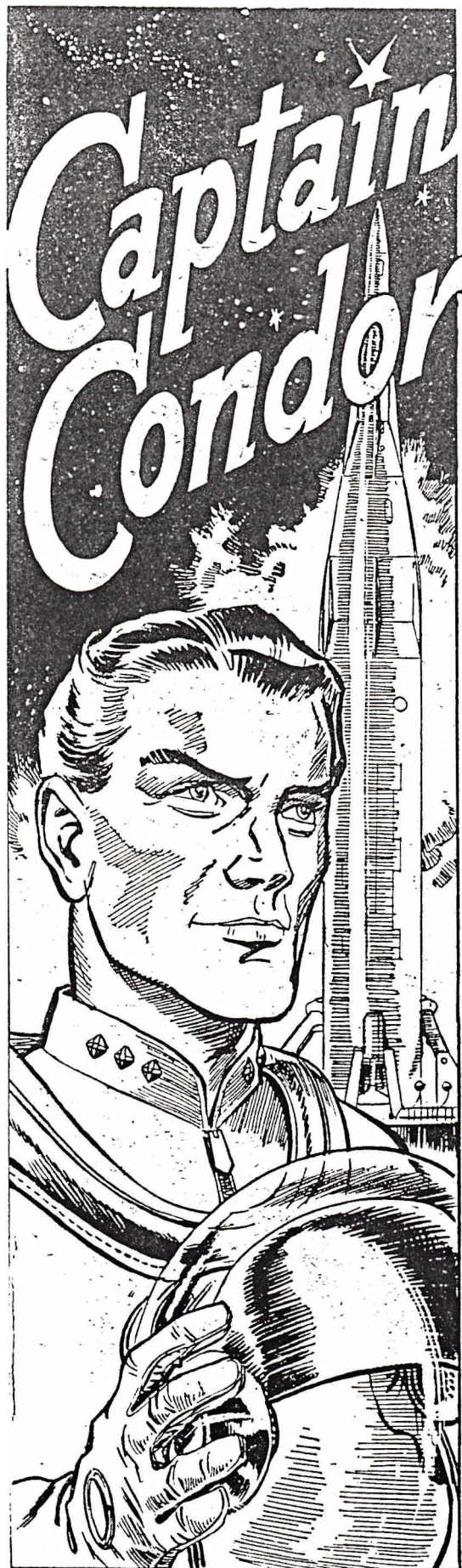
OUTLAW OF SPACE runs to 38 episodes, SPACEMAN OF THE UNKNOWN MOON - commencing 14 November 1952, lasts a further 34; SPACEMAN AVENGER from 11 July '53, THE SPACESHIP SPY until issue #130 (14th August 1954), and CAPTAIN CONDOR'S ROBOT RAIDERS completes the cycle. The final stories take Condor through 1954, and include some of Forbes' very best art. A cover dated 21 November '53, focuses on the large and complex Space Station J7 which Condor's rebels are about to board and capture. Its panoramic spread is about the most impressive he achieved.

Most of the following year is taken up with PLANET OF NO RETURN; the Dictator is gone, and Condor settles down to more regular Space Hero plot-lines. A sample "The Story so far ..." box reads "Captain Condor was Commander of a Space Patrol. He had gone to Zoltar, the dreaded planet of no return, in search of a lost spaceship, the *Atilla*. He and his pal, Hash, reached a strange world beneath the Zoltarian sea. Fearing Condor to be an enemy, the ruler, the Fajjwhal, sentenced him to trial by combat with a Crabbleclaw ...".

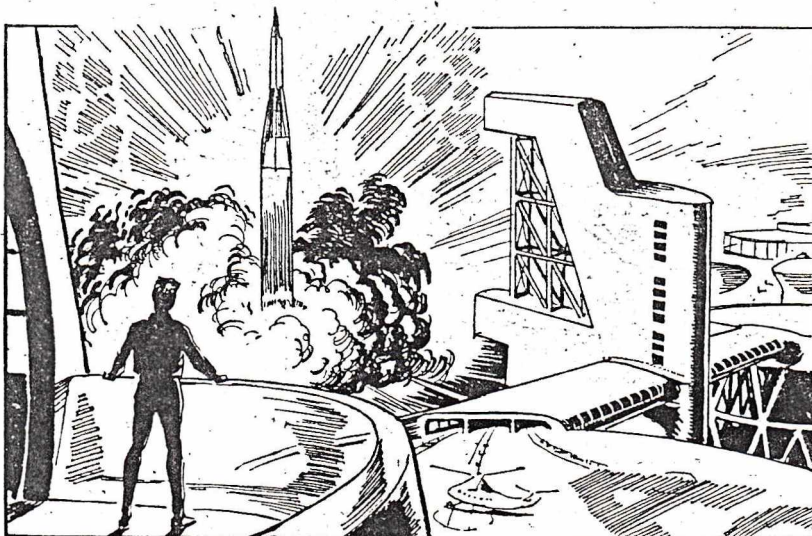
At the same time Frank Pepper was also scripting the centre-page war epic THE GREAT INVASION MYSTERY under the pen-name Hal Wilton. He went on to, at one time, write up to ten weekly pages for LION in addition to TIGER strips and work for the DC Thomson stable.

MYSTERY ON THE MOON, concerning Martian saboteurs on an orbiting "artificial sun" project, lasted through until the end of 1956, highlighted by a sequence in which Condor and the evil Snar

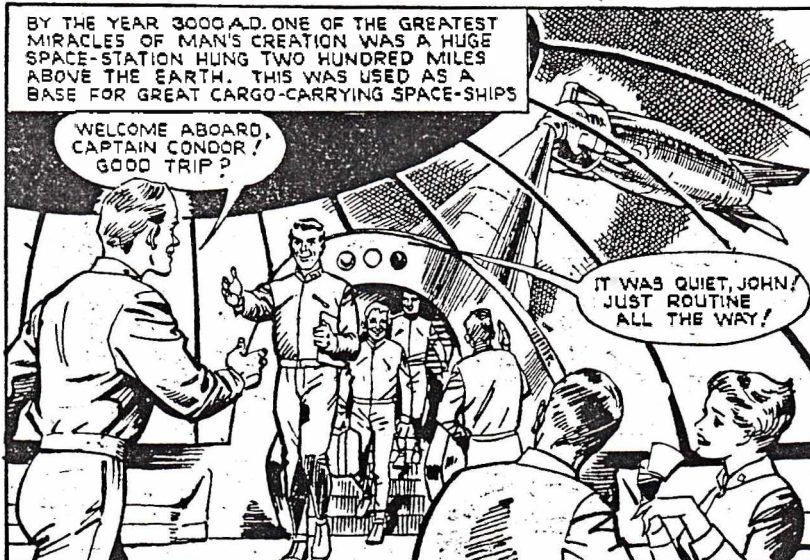
ONCE AGAIN THE LORD OF SPACE LEAPS INTO ANOTHER THRILL-PACKED ADVENTURE



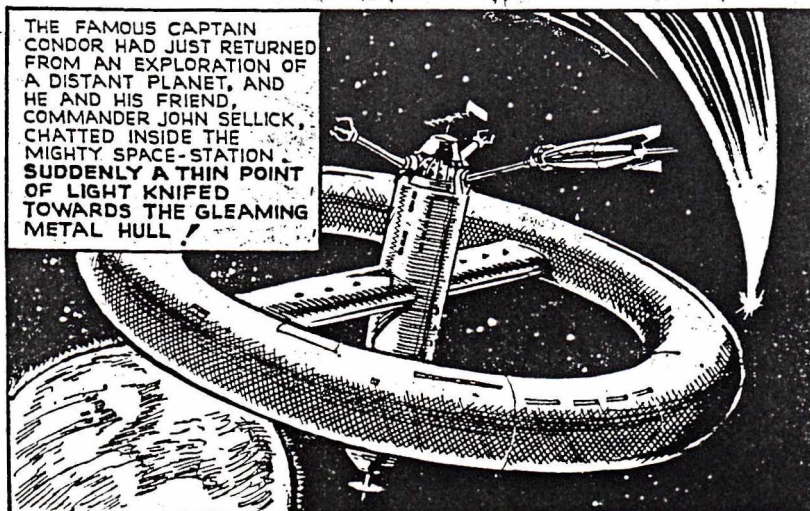
OUT OF THE BLAZING CRASH OF ELEMENTS OUR EARTH WAS PAINFULLY BORN. FROM THE OOZING, BUBBLING SWAMPS AND VOLCANOES, THERE EMERGED THE BEGINNINGS OF LIFE FROM WHICH DEVELOPED THE SUPREME ANIMAL - MAN. HE ADVANCED AND TRIUMPHED TO THE POINT WHERE HE CONQUERED THE MYSTERIES OF HIS OWN WORLD, AND SOUGHT NEW WONDERS IN THE DEPTHS OF SPACE FROM WHENCE HE HAD COME. HE ROCKETED TO THE MOON, THE PLANETS AND THE STARS...



BY THE YEAR 3000 A.D. ONE OF THE GREATEST MIRACLES OF MAN'S CREATION WAS A HUGE SPACE-STATION HUNG TWO HUNDRED MILES ABOVE THE EARTH. THIS WAS USED AS A BASE FOR GREAT CARGO-CARRYING SPACE-SHIPS



THE FAMOUS CAPTAIN CONDOR HAD JUST RETURNED FROM AN EXPLORATION OF A DISTANT PLANET, AND HE AND HIS FRIEND, COMMANDER JOHN SELICK, CHATTED INSIDE THE MIGHTY SPACE-STATION. SUDDENLY A THIN POINT OF LIGHT KNIFED TOWARDS THE GLEAMING METAL HULL!



Geoff Campion illustrates Frank Pepper's script for 'THE THING' - part one in 'LION 24th October 1959'

Krul "fought madly" for control of the spaceship steering wheel! S. O. S. FROM THE STARS gave Condor his 283rd cover, but that issue - dated 20 July 1957, was to be his last. In mid-story the strip transfers to an interior black-and-white spread, making way for pilot PADDY PAYNE: WARRIOR OF THE SKIES to assume the front page. This time Condor survives the treacherous winged Garks and the "zone of death" to rescue explorer Paul Drake held by Emperor Zaroc on the planet Troj - but there were other innovations.

Dan Dare has a regular back-up posse of minor characters to provide continuity, as did Jet-Ace Logan (who'd commenced in COMET 15th September 1956). Condor's companion throughout the "Unknown Moon" stories was "Pete", a Spacer singularly devoid of any trace of personality. In later stories - those illustrated by Watson and Lewis, Condor was assisted by the stalwart Quartermaster Burke, but through 1957 and '58 the strip was oddly colonised by Space Cadets Jason and Mike. Fresh out of Space College they were prone to exclaim "Blazing Comets! What a Wizard wheeze" at moments of high excitement. Such was the extent of their penetration of THE HAUNTED PLANET (starting 1 February '58), pitting them against Space Pirate Zom and his Claw-men, that Condor becomes almost an incidental walk-on presence in his own serial. The EAGLE stories feature cadets Flamer Spry and Steve Valiant. Jet-Ace Logan began life as an RAF Space Command cadet, going up to train further cadets on a test-flight from Titan. The logic behind this cadet-infestation was probably that the target readership were boys - yet the central figures were without exception adult. Perhaps the audience could more easily identify with space travellers of their own age group? Whatever the editorial motivation, by 1959 - and SPACE CASTAWAYS, Mike and Jason were gone; marooned on the ice-planet Mysto with the villainous Vanlan, Condor is restored to lead role. Soon the Space Patrol peaked cap would also be gone, as - incidentally, would Ron Forbes. He was replaced by Neville Wilson ...

In the hermetically tight world of comics changes were afoot. EAGLE, for so long the market leader, was brought up by Oldhams Press. The Frank Hampson team responsible for Dan Dare were replaced acrimoniously by Frank Bellamy with a brief to re-design the whole strip. Similarly Amalgamated Press were being taken over by Fleetway Publications (later IPC) and its titles immediately consumed. COMET was swallowed by TIGER who thereby acquired Jet-Ace Logan. After two introductory serials (the second one by SF novelist Ken Bulmer) Frank Pepper was given responsibility for scripting Logan too. Hence, for the best part of the next four years a man who initially professed no great knowledge of SF was simultaneously writing the genre's two most literate picture strips of the new decade. LION - in the meantime, swallowed Amalgamated's other title, SUN (from the issue dated 24 October 1959). SUN never boasted a bona fide Space Hero although it had run a quite respectable version of Edgar Rice Burroughs JOHN CARTER: WARLORD OF MARS. The only material gains from the merger were a slightly larger page-size and the acquisition (and rapid termination) of the Western BILLY THE KID. But less tangibly there was general up-gearing of the story content matched by the dropping of by-lines. For the now-uncredited Condor there had been a blur of artist changes including a serial called MYSTERY OF SPACE PROJECT Z which led into the merger, and FORBIDDEN PLANET which emerged from the other side of the change. The style alteration is immediately obvious. Later edited down to a 21-page feature in a LION SUMMER SPECIAL, FORBIDDEN PLANET features a world of telepathic aliens with the ability to control the perception of reality and project scary hallucinations - including a giant forbidding hand warning Condor's ship to turn back. It's a not uncommon SF theme but is handled intelligently and with great flair by Pepper and his new artist. The story includes a sequence in which Condor is confronted by multiple images of himself - an idea Pepper was to re-cycle, in a different context in Jet-Ace Logan's GIANTS FROM SPACE. Perhaps it was the discipline of producing those two strips concurrently, or just proof of Pepper's increasing confidence with the genre - whatever, it was apparent that some rationalisation was taking place. Logan, just one hundred years into the future, was confined to the solar system. Condor, a thousand years hence, used faster-than-light ships to take him to the stars; where "startling wonders, new thrills, unlimited

adventure awaited explorers on an endless variety of worlds. Frozen worlds, worlds that boiled, barren worlds, worlds that teemed with strange life forms - a glittering, spell-binding Universe that lured men to undreamed-of marvels - and spine-chilling perils!"

Earlier, as in S. O. S. FROM THE STARS, it had been sufficient to say "Captain Condor had gone to the Garkus star system ...", but suddenly he was journeying via "interstellar drive" to *real* stars - Rigel, Procyon, Capella. That might not seem a quantum jump, but to us pretentious astronomy-literate school kids who read Patrick Moore, it gave the stories the tang of hard science. The bonus of a genuine SF premise.

Then, following PLANET OF DESTRUCTION, there was Keith Watson too, and some of the most breath-catching Condor art yet. Born in 1935 Watson had joined Hampson at EAGLE in '56. An experienced and enthusiastic SF illustrator, colour is his ideal medium. Sometimes detail in smaller frames becomes lost in the Bridget Riley dazzle of the solid black/white wedges he favours. But individual panels of Condor's ship approaching "the blood-red light of the giant star Betelgeuse" in THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MEN (from 21 January 1961), or the predatory Orc fleet hanging between worlds in THE WAR IN SPACE ("... on the far side of the star Aldebaran, hidden by its radiation, the entire Orc battle-fleet waited like a pack of space-wolves" - issue dated 15 July 1961) are superb SF-art by any standards. Following his 18-month stint for LION Watson was drafted back to replace Bellamy on EAGLE. And although the Dare strip retained the edge of its by-now largely historic prestige, the work he'd done on Condor is often of superior quality. Exiled to interior pages, and also in black 'n' white, Watson's pen embellishes OPERATION EARTHSABERS (10 March to 8 June 1962), a story in which Dare and Digby battle against sentient Triffid-like plants. Earlier, and more convincingly, Condor had faced similarly monstrous plant-growths in OPERATION CATASTROPHE, where an orbiting mega-computer influences insect and vegetation on Earth to produce giant mutations.

Pepper's own favourite Condor tale was also inked by Keith Watson. "THE WAR IN SPACE was a combination of World War II themes projected into a space setting", he explained to me. "We had Quisling invasion techniques, plus the fall of Singapore and Pearl Harbour, plus a resistance movement and the culmination in a sort of D-Day". The alien aggressors - the bird-like Orcs, perhaps owe their name to Tolkien. Or perhaps not. After all, Zor - the "unknown moon" and its Zorian inhabitants of ten years earlier share their names with the robotic aliens from Neil R. Jones 1931 AMAZING STORIES SF sagas of "Professor Jameson", of which Pepper was probably unaware. WAR IN SPACE drew to a close in April 1962, but in my estimation, the best was yet to come.

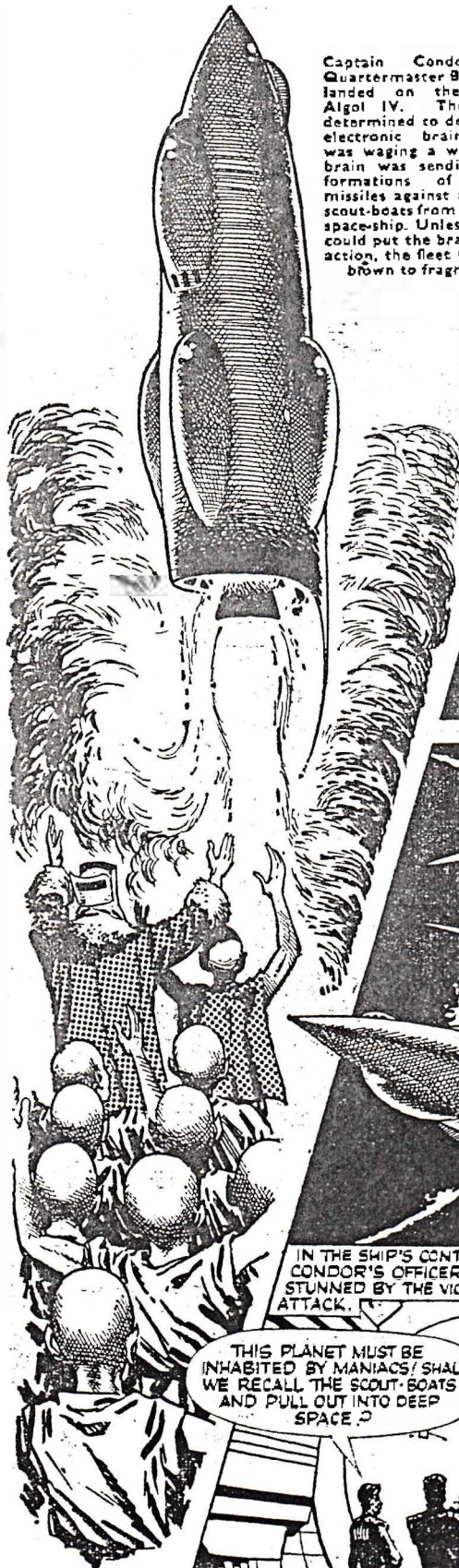
Although he'd served time doing work for LONE STAR monthly from 1958 Brian Lewis is most renown for his revolutionary abstract covers for John Carnell's NEW WORLDS magazine, art that draws on surrealism - Yves Tanguy in particular, and uses it in juxtaposition with startling SF images. To Brian Aldiss the "breezy and attractive artwork of Brian Lewis dominated the British "Nova" magazines", but in Nova's more action-powered SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES his covers and interior illustrations already betray Condor traits in uniform, ships and machinery details. For his Captain Condor story - THE PUSH BUTTON PLANET, which ran through 1962, he intensifies his work with mechanical tints, a series of "screen" effects to obtain shadings to give depth and dimension. Condor and Burke explore Algol IV - a world with two warring continents separated by a vast equatorial ocean. Centuries before, its inhabitants had sheltered in artificial subterranean labyrinths leaving rival electronic brains to continue their surface war through sophisticated robotics. It's Condor's mission to unravel the world's enigma, and then destroy the "brains". For once the story quality is perfectly balanced by the art; Lewis' imagination and skill fairly equal to the convolutions of the plot, and the THE PUSH-BUTTON PLANET remains one of the finest examples of the SF picture strip ever produced. Lewis - an ex-R.A.F. man with Engineering Design experience, went on to work with stop-motion animated film (including the Beatles' YELLOW SUBMARINE), returning to draw a single short "new" Dan Dare strip - NIGHTMARE, for 2000 AD progs 61 to 63 (April 1978), but tragically he died soon after, on 4 December of the same year.

(Continued p 11)

DEADLY MISSILES BURST ABOUT THE WAITING SPACERS!

CAPTAIN CONDOR & The PUSH-BUTTON PLANET

Captain Condor and Quartermaster Burke had landed on the planet Algol IV. They were determined to destroy an electronic brain which was waging a war. The brain was sending mass formations of guided missiles against a fleet of scout-boats from Condor's space-ship. Unless Condor could put the brain out of action, the fleet would be blown to fragments!



THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE DEAFENING THUNDER OF ROCKETS TAKING OFF AS CONDOR MADE DESPERATE EFFORTS TO DISCOVER HOW TO STOP THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN'S TRANSMISSION.

IF I WORK THESE SWITCHES IN THE WRONG ORDER, THE BRAIN WILL KNOW IT'S BEING TAMPERED WITH, AND WILL HAVE TIME TO DESTROY US BEFORE WE CAN PUT IT OUT OF ACTION!

YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE A CHANCE, CAPTAIN!

THE SPACE-BOAT CREWS KEPT UP A RELENTLESS FIRE TO EXPLODE THE ROBOT MISSILES BEFORE THEY COULD REACH THEIR TARGETS. BUT —

IT'S HOPELESS. THEY'RE COMING UP FASTER THAN WE CAN HIT THEM!

IN THE SHIP'S CONTROL ROOM, CONDOR'S OFFICERS WERE STUNNED BY THE VIOLENCE OF THE ATTACK.

THIS PLANET MUST BE INHABITED BY MANIACS! SHALL WE RECALL THE SCOUT-BOATS AND PULL OUT INTO DEEP SPACE?

NO, WE CAN'T ABANDON THE CAPTAIN AND BURKE. WE'VE GOT TO FIGHT OUR WAY THROUGH TO THEM!

CONDOR HAD NOW REACHED A DECISION.

I'M HOPING I'VE GOT THE BRAIN FIGURED OUT. BURKE, I'M GOING TO START PULLING SWITCHES!

BRIAN LEWIS ART FOR CAPTAIN CONDOR'S FINEST MOMENT, 1962

INFINITE MADONNA

by Brent Lillie

PATRICIA MAY CAMPBELL ENTERED St Andrews hospital on the Tuesday, March 17, accompanied by her husband, Mark. After having their details taken at the admittance desk, they made their way to maternity. Mark supported Patricia with one hand while in the other he carried an overnight bag packed with clothes his wife would never get to wear, toiletries she would never get to use and magazines she would never get to read.

Even though Patricia's water had broken well over an hour before, the trip to the hospital had been made in a state of relative calm (the Campbells already had two children). The only relative not calm was Mark's mother, but everyone had come to expect that. In Mark and Patricia's minds, things were proceeding pretty much to plan.

Mark, an electrician, would watch the birth. Displaying a smug air of having been there and done that, he strolled past the first-time fathers-to-be fretting in the waiting area. Mark wanted to tell them that there was no need to be concerned, but he didn't, so as not to spoil their mood.

Dr Akamuna, who had delivered Joan, the second of the Campbell's children, was on duty that day and he greeted the Campbells cordially, even cracking a joke or two. A pair of nurses accompanied the pregnant woman to the delivery room. After examining Patricia Doctor Akamuna declared that she was almost fully dilated.

The nurses patted the pillows and did what nurses do. Dr Akamuna went off somewhere, to casually linger in the wings.

The other fathers-to-be eyed Mark jealously when a nurse entered the waiting room and said: 'Mr Campbell, the baby's coming.' In fact, they looked at Mark as though he'd jumped a cue or something, but Mark ignored them.

Patricia positively glowed; serene and beautiful, she gazed up at Mark from her crisp, white pillow.

"How do you feel?" he whispered.

"Hungry."

He gave a little frown. Odd. Patricia had never felt hungry before. When the doctor entered the room, Mark sidled over.

"She's hungry," he said, as an aside.

"So am I," Dr Akamuna replied, not batting an eyelid. "It's lunchtime."

"It's coming, doctor," one of the nurses said.

Patricia had her eyes closed. She looked as though she was asleep, dreaming, with the hint of a smile on her lips.

Dr Akamuna braced himself, standing between Patricia's legs with his palms extended and slightly apart, like a man about to catch a medicine ball.

The baby's head appeared.

"Push, Patricia," Akamuna urged softly.

The baby popped out: smoothly, moistly, effortlessly, into the doctor's waiting hands. Doctor Akamuna half-turned in Mark's direction.

"Do you want to cut the cord?"

"No thanks. Is it...a boy?" He always got confused, what with the umbilical cord, and everything.

"It's a boy." The doctor squinted up between Patricia's legs. "Where in the hell's the placenta? Ah!" A short pause. "Jesus," he exclaimed. "I think there's another one!"

And sure enough, another tiny head emerged. Akamuna seemed perplexed, but he regained his composure almost immediately.

The child was delivered - a baby girl this time - and placed into the hands of one of the nurses. The doctor wiped a sleeve across his brow. "Well, that was a bit of a surprise!" he said, and he turned and began to walk away from the bed.

"I'm hungry," a small voice piped.

The nurses and the doctor jumped, and stared at the twins.

"How can you be hungry, darling?" Mark responded coolly.

"I just am," Patricia said. "I'm starving!"

Unbelievably, another head was peeping out from between Patricia's legs. Akamuna took a step forward, a step back. He looked around the room.

"What is this?" he growled. "Candid Camera?"

"Doctor..." a nurse warned.

He delivered - passed the baby to the nurse, who handed the baby to another nurse, who took the baby out of the delivery room and stored it away God knows where.

"Jesus, triplets!" Mark said. In the back of his mind he was calculating what kind of trade-in he could get on their sedan.

"Shit!" exclaimed a nurse. "There's more!"

"Please, get me some food!" pleaded Patricia.

Mark couldn't stand it. While the next baby came, he left the delivery room and made his way to the hospital canteen. The waiting room, usually a place of quiet conversations and nervous silences, was now in a state of absolute chaos, but Mark didn't pause to wonder why. At the canteen he purchased two packets of lightly-salted potato chips and a chocolate bar. There was a telephone just around the corner, and he knew he should call his mother, but, God, what could he say? Whatever happened, she would blame herself - she always did. If Earth left its orbit tomorrow and fell into the sun, it would be Mark Campbell's mother's fault. Why did she always do that? Because he always let her, probably.

When he returned to the delivery room, Doctor Akamuna was waiting for him outside.

"What did you do to that poor woman?" the doctor demanded.

"Wait a minute!" Mark protested. "Who's in there with my wife?"

"A colleague. Mason. Christ, they won't bloody stop! Was she on some kind of experimental drug programme?"

Mark wanted to punch Doctor Akamuna, but he fought the urge instead.

"Of course not! She doesn't even smoke! She doesn't do anything!" Helplessly, he examined the food in his hands. "She said she was hungry."

Akamuna took the food and shouted for a nurse. One appeared, but by no means immediately.

"Give these to Mrs Campbell." The doctor looked very tired, like someone who had just spent a night on a park bench. Perhaps two nights. He regarded Mark thoughtfully, though not unsympathetically.

"How many so far?" Mark said.

"Nine."

"Nine? Nine?" Mark yelped and began pacing up and down the corridor, slapping his head. Akamuna restrained him.

"She's all right. All the babies are healthy. They keep coming out so...easily. It's like working on a production line. It started out as a baby every thirty seconds. Now it's down to ten, and it's getting quicker. I'm going to have to set a couple of slips fielders soon." The doctor jerked his head in the direction of the maternity ward. "Did you know that every other pregnancy in the hospital has terminated itself?"

"I don't understand..."

"No stillbirths, or miscarriages, just no babies in the mothers' tummies anymore. The only woman having babies in this hospital...the only woman that will have a baby - babies - in this hospital in the immediate future, is your wife!"

The reasons behind the turmoil in the waiting room suddenly became abundantly clear to Mark. Those poor fathers. And even worse, what about the poor wives? Maybe he could donate a couple of babies instead of handing out cigars.

"How?"

Akamuna shook his head.

"I don't know. We've been in contact with Mercy and City General. It's happening everywhere, as far as we can tell. No babies

being born anywhere, except..."

A nurse poked her head around the door.

"Doctor, she's still hungry. Do we have any chocolate cake?"

Akamuna looked at Mark, then down at his bloodstained gloves and gown, and chuckled.

"Chocolate cake...Look, Mr Campbell. I've got to clean up and talk to some people. Things have got to be done."

Mark grabbed at the doctor before he walked away.

"But it...! But all those babies! She may as well be a..."

"Don't say it," the doctor warned. Someone rushed by with a large slice of cake on a plate.

"Sponge," Akamuna sighed. "But it will have to do. I've got to go. Go and talk to her, but I warn you, it's a nightmare in there!"

Patricia stuffed the last piece of cake in her mouth. As Mark entered, she held out the plate imploringly.

"More, please! Get me some more!"

A baby shot out from between her legs, into Mason's arms. Behind the mask, the doctor's face was red, apoplectic. Another doctor burst into the room, still pulling on his gloves. Two nurses were making futile attempts to clean up the floor with a mop and bucket, while others placed wailing, screaming babies into cribs that rolled in and out of the delivery room like shopping trolleys.

"Food!" Patricia howled. "Oh God, Mark! Get me some more food!"

- Brent Lillie

[MADONNA was first published in the CSFS newsletter. I've reprinted it in TM because I thought it warranted wider circulation - Ron.]

CAPTAIN CONDOR (cont. from page 8)

Meanwhile Condor was never to achieve such heights again. There were two more artists; THE OUTLAWED PLANET, PLANET OF THE STONE-AGE MEN, and FUGITIVES FROM SPACE through to mid-1963, then THE DAY THE SUN WENT OUT and the final picture strip OPERATION SPACEWRECK which was abruptly terminated 1 April 1964. To Pepper this was because "the supply of suitable artists fizzled out, and it was for that reason and not for any decline in popularity that Condor came to an end" (to David Ashford in GOLDEN FUN #8), a contention he proved by writing a weekly series of text stories featuring Condor that continued intermittently for some years, "but that was no solution. As everyone in the picture strip business knows, only a very small minority of readers - if you can call them that, bother to read written stories".

Despite his unquestioned mastery of the strip format there's some evidence to suggest that he always valued his prose work more highly. He spoke with obvious satisfaction of producing text ROCKFIST ROGAN stories for CHAMPION for 22 years - "millions and millions of words", and also of writing Dan Dare prose for annuals (probably DAN DARE'S SPACE ANNUAL 1963). And Captain Condor stories such as THE WORLD THAT WOULDN'T STOP (27 June '64) or WORLD OF GIANT BUTTERFLIES (25 July) were fully as good as fiction appearing in contemporary adult SF magazines. Even after the weekly adventures were discontinued they went on appearing in LION ANNUAL until 1968. Condor picture strips had been an integral part of annuals since MYSTERY OF THE VANISHED SPACESHIPS in the first annual dated 1954. Now highly collectable the early numbers feature garish Condor covers too - a spaceship hurtling from Saturn on the first book, the ROBOT SPACEMEN for the second (1955), Condor and companion hovering over a glowing lunar surface with Ron Forbes space-craft in the background from the 1956 story CAPTAIN CONDOR FIGHTS THE SPACE PIRATES, MENACE ON SPACE STATION 59, (1957), PRISONERS OF THE SPACE OUTLAW (1958), and on his last cover - a striking colour close-up of Condor with blaster pistol in gauntleted fist for the 1962 CAPTAIN CONDOR FIGHTS THE FLAME DEMON OF SATURN. For the next - PIRACY ON SATELLITE 7, there is art by John Gillat, giving tantalising glimpses of just how incandescent the weekly stories could be if handled by an artist of his expressive and inventive skills. The

1965 annual includes the text story MENACE FROM THE FROZEN PLANET (spot-art also by Gillat), followed by MYSTERY MEN FROM FANTASY PLANET. The final tale is CAPTAIN CONDOR ON MYSTERY PLANET for the 1968 annual.

By then the genre was faltering. SPACE ACE and JET MORGAN were already long-gone, JET-ACE LOGAN continued as a series of re-prints from 1964. Ironically, following the demise of EAGLE, the Dan Dare series transferred to LION - thereby ensuring that a similar recycling should not befall Condor. From the issue dated 3 May 1969 the first LION AND EAGLE began re-running Dan Dare's REIGN OF THE ROBOTS, while the 1971 annual also features a Dan Dare strip (GAMES OF DOOM)

I owe Frank S. Pepper a very great deal. It was his fast-paced tightly-plotted stories that ignited my sense of wonder. That introduced me to the star-spanning science fiction concepts that have subsequently dominated my life. He was always dismissive about the importance of his work, regarding it as ephemeral junk culture. The collectors, the cult that has grown up around his material, and the continuing interest in it, is something he greeted with incredulity.

Length restriction limits my coverage of his Condor stories, there are others. THE UNSEEN ENEMY about Earth's infiltration by invisible aliens, and THE SLAVE-HUNTERS FROM OUTER SPACE about an attack on an Earth colony by a subaquatic culture. There was also a LION PICTURE LIBRARY of pocket-books that runs to 125 issues and features CAPTAIN CONDOR: SPACE ACE - a savagely edited version of MYSTERY ON THE MOON (#6) and THE FRIGHTENED PLANET (#9). In a letter to me Frank also refers to a text story he'd written for a LION HOLIDAY SPECIAL as late as 1981, which I've so far been unable to trace.

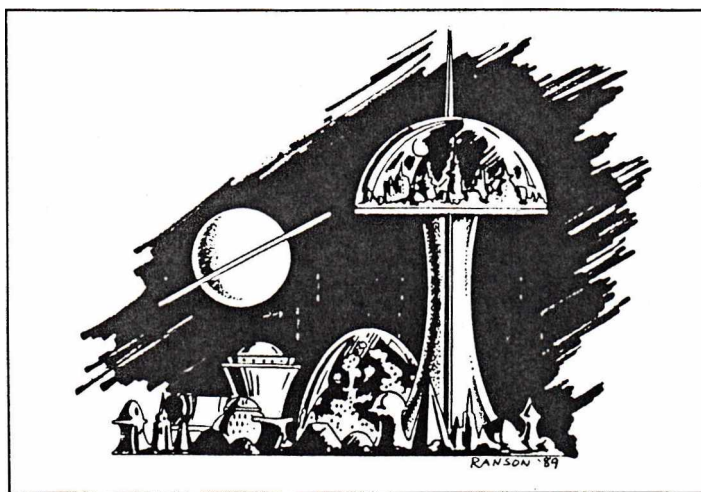
But Condor is one of many Pepper creations. The constantly switching art style does disrupt the character continuity, each new illustrator adding to - and subtracting from the development of a unified mythos; to Keith Watson Condor and Burke begin to resemble Dare and Digby, to Gillat Condor's black slicked-back hair attains a close similarity to Jet-Ace Logan's Flight Lieutenant Cobb. "Making Condor, to begin with, a rather stock character hero with no special attributes was deliberate", he told me, "to leave plenty of room for development later" - and character, starship and uniform designs continue to "develop" with each new pen. It's interesting to speculate what growth would have occurred if the Brian Lewis partnership had persisted longer, if Keith Watson had stayed on, if John Gillat or Ron Turner had been induced to work on the strip instead of the sometimes dull and inadequate illustrators Pepper often had to settle for. But as it is, the best of CAPTAIN CONDOR is among the best of its genre.

A SUNDAY TIMES Frank Pepper profile by Mick Brown, celebrating 30 years of ROY OF THE ROVERS claims "he (Pepper) would always knock Roy off in a day and stuff him in the letterbox, prouder of his other creations CAPTAIN CONDOR and ROCKFIST ROGAN - although where are they now?" (9 September 1984).

Well Mick - Condor's still here!

Frank S. Pepper died, aged 78 and still writing, on 13th December 1988.

- Andy Darlington



THE VSE OF THE TWO HAND SWORDE (BRITISH MUSEUM, 15TH CENT. HARLEIAN MS. 3542, FF.82-85

ENVISAGED FOR YOUR EDIFICATION BY THE
ERIDUTE ELCIDATION
OF PETER JAMES BRODIE ESQ.

The ferste playng & begynnyng of the substansce of ye too honde swerde/ ye ferst gronde be gynyth¹ wt an hauke² beryng inwt ye foete wt a double rownde wt. iij. fete howtewarde & as meny homward makynge ende of ye play wt a quarter cros smety wt an hauke snach setting down by ye foete.

The .ij. lesson ys.ij. haukys wt. ij. halfe haukys cleuyng ye elbowys wyth ye same. ij. doubylrowndys forsayde wt. iij. foete outward, & as meny hamward.

The. iij. lesson ys a sprynge vpward. wt an hauke quarter. downe by ye cheke. wt. ij. doubylrowndys stondyg borne on ye hed. wt a dowbylrownde born in wt ye foete. wt. iij. outwards.

The. iij. lesson. ys wt a dowbil hauke wyth. ij. doubil rowndis³ beryng inwt a step vp on bothe feete.

The. 5. lesson ys wt an hauke menynd⁴ our ye hede, but bere ht vp wt a step. breke of ye erthe wt renyng rowndis on ye hedewt. ij. halfe hawkis born wt. ij. koc stappis⁵ of ye foete.

The .6. lesson bere ovte ye erthe wt. iij. koc stapps & so come home ovte of danger a gayne.

The.7. lesson ys. Smythe an hauke cros. cros our ye elbowys wt a bak stop & so smyte ht on ye fet.

The.8. lessonys wt. an hauke cross smyty wt a bakstep born wt bothe fete & a contrary hauke hamward born wt. ij. steppis.

These ben stroke & revle of ye. ij. hondswerd to make hys hond & ys foete a corde.

The play of ye.ij. hondswerd by twene. ij. bokelers⁶ ys. fyrest take a sygne of ye gonde ther ye play by twene. ij. bokelers. make ferst a sygne to he wt a large hauke down to ye grownde. wt. iij. rollyng strokis⁷. wt an hauke to ye oder side.

The. ij. lesson ys a chase, or an hauke wyt a quartr born in wt a kocstep & an hauke born in wt a chase foyn⁸. y made vp wt a lygte spryg.

The .3. lesson ys.a chase⁹. wt. ij. hawkys cleuyng ye elbovis.

The.4. lesson. ys a chase smety wt. ij. half rowndis. wt. ij. kocstoppis. a qtr wt a steppe an hauke wt a chase foyn.wt ye stroke a venture¹⁰ smety on. iij. fete. & made vp wt a rake¹¹ down. & bore vp wt a dovil hauke. & so serue ye stroke auctur vp on bothe fete.

The.5. lesson. ys a chase wt an hauke & wt a bakstep stondyg on ye foete. & playng on yt othr syde a qtr & ye same chase.& an hawk wt astep. & an hauke wt a chase foyn contry smyten. & so smyte in wt bothe feete i made vp wt. ij. halfe hauke. wt. ij.bakstoppis. & wt ye renyng¹².

The.6. lessson ys.ij. hauke qrters rovnys wt a brokyn halfe hauke a leyng down to ye foete wt a contraray honde ys is ye fyrst leyng a dovne.

The.7.lesson & ye fyrst takynge vp ys. iij. rakys vpward & iij. downward. & gan inwt a grete steppe. wt doubyl qtr wel smyty. beryng ovte wt ye foete a brokyn halfe hauke setting downe ye swerde by ye foete.

The.8.lesson & ye secnde leyng a dovne of thy swerde.ij. haukys wt a qtr & iij wt ye foete wt a brokyn hauke. a leyng dovne to ye foete wt a cotrary honde.

The.9. lesson & ye secnde takynge vp of thy swerde ys.ij.haukys on euych¹³ syde stondyg on ye erthe stil wt a stop bor menynd on ye erthe. wt an hauke quartr born wt a step. and wt a doubyl qtr honde & foete born our ye hede. an hauke menynd setting thy swerd by thy foete.

The.10 lesson & ye. iij. leyng down of thy swerd ys a qtr & in wt ye foete & an hauke brokyng at ye cheke & then a doubil hauke a bove ye hed brokyn. & then in wt a spryge of ye foete. wt a stroke aucture¹⁴ wt a qtr & wt a snache. leyng to ye erthe wt a cotrary honde.

The.11. lesson & ye iij. takynge vp ys wt a syrynge wt yt on hond rigte vp on to ye visage wt a halfe rounde broky in to a step wt a reuence to ye cros of thy hille wt a long cartar stroke smety flat dovne by ye bak. wt a doubil broky spryng bak ye foete a drawyng. & in wt a long rake dovil. in wyth ye foete walking & on eche foete.ij. rakys. & at ye alurys ende smyte in.ij. rakys doubille born into a step. and so ye othr rakys in to ye alure ende. & dovil yt on in to a step. a gayn turnyg in wt a long dovil rake wt a step. & wt yt othr hond spryng vp thy swerd to thy rygt shulder & smyte they stroke auctur wt an hauke setting dovne thy swerd by thy foete.

TO INCOUNTER WITH THE TWO HAND SWORDE.

And as for ye first contenance of ye. ij. hod swerd. thou shalt walk in wt. iij. foete to thy adusary wt a bold spyrt & a mery herte wt a sengyl qtr. & a sengil quartr wastyd¹⁵ wt a cartr stroke, and thus smyte thy conter bothe of & on & lete thy hond & thy foet a corde to geder in goede afesne.

The.ij. conter ys wt a doubil quartr wt thy foete goyng. & a dovil quartr wastid in to a step and in wt thy foete & smyte a large hauke vp in to ye skye. wt a doubil snache.

The.3. lesson of ye cownter ys. a rake on eche foete goyng till thou come to thy adusary.wt a doubil quart wt hole defense born wt an othr dovil qtr wt hole defense breke in & a sygne a toche wt a large sprynge & smyte wt fers stroke menynd wt hole defense & so smyte ys cownter bothe of & on. & bove¹⁶ thy strokis of eche of thy cowntis.

The.4. cownter ys.ij. halfe rowndys. Wyth a tnye¹⁷ foyne, beryng in ye foyne wt a qtr. & an hauke at ye skye wt a snache wt thy hole defence born a for the. & ths cownter most be smete wt tnspoyng¹⁸ of thy erthe of bothe fete for surenesse of defence.

The. 5. cownter is an halfe rownde of ye secnde foete.& than smythe.ij. dovil haukys & bothe sides hole. & broke enter hy wt ye ferst foete. wt a dovil qtr. & so smyte a cartr stroke but the¹⁹ hym wt a stroke aucture wt hole defence. & thys smyte ths cownter bothe of & on.& lete thy eye. thy foete. & thy honde a corde in thy defence. ye cause of stroke aucture is called. for a ma tnyth hys bak to hys enemy.

The.6. cownter ys beryng in wt.ij. foyns on bothe fete.& loke thou the hond & foete & smyte a large qtr. & ber in a stop wt thy bak nakyd born. & smyte a large hauke wt fers hert & draw hym sor vp to ye skye.

The.7. cownter ys menynd wt.ij. menynd foyns & traspose, ha bothe goyng & comyng. & smyte thy foyns wt in thy sengyl quartr. & at ye last quartr smyte a large sprynge wt a sore stop a fore & then a chase foyne.

ENDE

¹ Beginneth

² A blow

³ Circular cut

⁴ Managed

⁵ Nimble steps

⁶ Those who contest

⁷ Moulins

⁸ Thrust

⁹ A charge. An attack made to drive back an enemy

¹⁰ A stroke made at a chance opening shown by the enemy

¹¹ Rake is a blow given at the fullest reach

¹² Running

¹³ Each

¹⁴ Severe

¹⁵ Well laid on

¹⁶ Bear

¹⁷ Turning

¹⁸ Positioning

¹⁹ Turn

FAITH AND FORTUNE

by Margaret Pearce

The company lawyer for A.V.U. (All Ventures Unlimited) was ecstatic in his report about the newly opened planet. Not only was it ripe as a peach for exploitation by the off-planet companies, it actually welcomed investment and off-planet companies.

'Civilized, peaceful and prosperous, and they are prepared to give a very hearty welcome to all new off-planet industries and trading, and we get in first and have a monopoly on everything. Kill our competition!'

'Must be a catch,' the company secretary warned. Their company had never been caught or had its financial fingers burned by any of their ventures, but he was by nature suspicious.

'I put a team down to check everything out,' the company lawyer said. He threw his sheaf of reports on the boardroom table. 'They are a harmonious people. No crime, and even the beggars are well fed and well dressed. The planet-wide religion is a female god. Temples everywhere, and one day a week, and one week a year for worship. The planet is run by a set of hereditary families, and they have given us the go ahead. We can establish our manufacturing works and take up options in the local shopping centres to flood their markets.'

'Unnatural,' the company director grumbled. 'Is there going to be any difficulty with trade permits from the Federation?'

'Issued without a hitch.' The company lawyer looked thoughtful, and then shrugged away his vague unease. He was very thorough in his work, but the ease with which he acquired that trading permit made him nervous. Why had the Federation been so helpful?

'Someone had better go down and live on the planet for a few months to snoop around before we start setting up any industries down there,' the company accountant advised. He was a dour nitpicker who was noted for his disbelief in everything except his own figures.

'Nice climate and no diseases or predators, and they have been at peace for thousands of years,' the lawyer said. 'I'll take the wife and family down for a few months, and potter around and look for suitable sites for our factories. It is a pleasant place to work in, and with the new hypno tapes the language is no problem.'

In the end the four wealthy and controlling shareholders of A.V.U. found their way down to the pleasant planet Aurella. The accountant picked a small seaside cottage and a powerful jet plane. The managing director chose a spare palace at a very reasonable price, paid for by the company. His latest wife was enamoured of all the pink marble and magnificent entertaining areas. The lawyer was happy to buy a smaller and more thrifty palace adorned with black marble and bronze covered copulas. The secretary settled for a magnificent home in the hills. All the homes came with their own already paid-for servants on some sort of twelve month lease.

The lawyer was the first to be vaguely discontented. The gambling mania of the locals was contagious. He swapped his two sons around the excellent schools, but there was no way of decontaminating his teen-aged sons from the gambling problem. Even the four year old children gambled their toys and their sweets away in the kindergartens. After a while he shrugged and stopped hassling the boys for their unexpected addiction. How could he expect his sons to be immune to the planet-wide craze? They would return to a sense of proportion about gambling when they moved off planet.

The accountant called a meeting of the Board. He bought to their attention the odd anomaly of the high suicide rate after the annual week of worship.

'It never even snows and no-one goes hungry or homeless,' he said. 'Why should a place with such a blessed environment have such a high suicide rate when all the citizens seem to have such a zest for living?'

'Boredom,' the secretary said. 'No challenge in the climate or

environment. Gambling and church going are probably the only excitement they have to relieve the boredom.'

'We'll do a computer breakdown on what the suicides have in common,' the managing director suggested after a thoughtful silence. 'We have set up six manufacturing centres, and taken over nearly a thousand retail outlets around the planet. We can't risk having our manufacturing or selling centres inconvenienced by staff losses.'

'All the staff are juniors, and working for a token wage, and very happy to do so.' The accountant let his tight lips relax into an almost smile as he thought of the satisfactory arrangement he had come to with one of the hereditary Heads. It seemed that some of the young inhabitants had the equivalent of serf status in this pleasant planet. Yet it didn't seem to have anything to do with economics. The hereditary Head had ridden away from their meeting on an old bicycle. 'I can't see any of them as high suicide risks.'

The computer breakdown showed that suicides were male, and aged over fifty. The shareholders heaved a collective sigh of relief.

'Post change-of-life depression,' suggested the secretary. 'It is definitely a youth orientated planet. Everyone seems to have such a zest for enjoying life.'

'Maybe terminal illness,' mused the managing director.

'Nothing to worry about anyway,' the accountant said. 'All the staff is young, and I'll put out a directive not to employ older males.'

A.V.U. had their bi-annual meeting, and the shareholders, already individually richer than many planets in the Federation, were jubilant at the straight profits made for the six months they had been on the planet.

The accountant mentioned the crippling tax on them as an off planet consortium, and brought up the issue of becoming citizens of Aurella.

'Local businesses pay no tax, which is why any off planet business is crippled with such high tax.'

'We're still making a profit,' the director said.

'It would be straight profit if we and the company were citizens of this planet,' said the lawyer.

'We could split A.V.U. and all planet based business could become a member of the planet,' the lawyer suggested. 'We all live here, and like living here, so there is no hassle about us becoming citizens of Aurella.'

'How would we get our profits off planet?' the accountant asked.

'We control A.V.U.,' the lawyer pointed out. 'We'll just arrange to have off-planet luxuries for A.V.U. employees brought in through our Federation A.V.U. at over-inflated prices - a sort of laundry service.'

This motion was passed and approved. The four directors became citizens of Aurella. The planetary people were apologetic as they explained that the lawyer's sons would have to reach their majority of eighteen years before they could become citizens, but as children of citizens they were entitled to all the privileges of citizens, and that included becoming members of the state religion.

'Attendance not compulsory, you understand,' one of the Heads explained. 'Just the membership, but most of the faithful like to attend to listen to the Lady of Fortune.'

The complicated paperwork to make the A.V.U. subsidiary a sort of company citizen of the planet was ratified, both by the hereditary Heads of the planet and the smoothly efficient Federation.

'Can't stand those slimy b's,' the lawyer grumbled after the spaceship of the representatives of the Federation had lifted off. 'They always give the impression of sniggering up their sleeves at us, and we've come out on top during most of our contests with them.'

'Haw haw,' laughed the contented and jovial director. 'If they have sleeves. Anyway, this time we are well on top.'

One of the minor inconveniences of being a citizen of the planet was that they were now paying members of the interminable lotteries. The accountant was furious that his wife had somehow managed to lose his jet flier during a lottery, but while he was still frantically untangling the details of how it happened that she had unwittingly staked the jet flier, the news came that she had won a space yacht, and then the ownership of a beauty parlour, so he let the matter lapse.

The director did well out of the lotteries, and kept winning, week after week, cash and services although, he admitted, he still didn't understand how the system of the lotteries worked, or why the results should always be given at the local temples.

The lawyer researched that everyone who had reached their majority had citizenship numbers. It was these numbers that were

rolled weekly, with the population breathlessly watching the interminable lists of winnings shown at the local church programs. Although church services weren't compulsory, once the directors realised that the main part of the service was devoted to the displays of winning numbers, they attended religiously. It seemed a wonderful system for a lottery, as every week, long lists of people won prizes, or were awarded some sort of credit certificates.

'And the best is that you don't have to enter - you are in it automatically because you own a citizenship number,' the lawyer reported. 'You don't even have to collect, as they have all the details. They turned up to build a swimming pool for us last week, and I didn't know a thing about it.'

It was the lawyer's seventeen year old son, who had settled very contentedly into their new life, who mentioned the annual lottery. 'Hope I don't get awarded a Certificate in the big one,' he said idly. 'It's for twelve months.'

'Certificate of what,' his father asked.

'Credit of course.'

'Credit,' his father repeated blankly.

'Gee, dad, don't you ever take any notice of anything under your nose! The annual Big One starts tomorrow, and all the minor's names will be in it.' His father still looked blank. 'Minors aren't allowed assets so have to give their twelve months labour as their credits when their names come up, and the credits are used as asset exchanges so they can still win decent prizes. Adults without assets also have their labour conscripted for twelve months.'

'Assets?' the lawyer said sharply, some sort of protective instinct bringing him to sharp attention.

'Yeah, every twelve months every asset on the planet goes into the big one. Presided over by the blind goddess, the Lady of Fortune.' His son waxed enthusiastic. 'Terrific system. Your luck would have to be really bad for you to stay under the wheel longer than a planetary revolution. Everyone has the chance to go from being a beggar to a crown prince in the space of twelve months.'

'Well at least we're safe,' the lawyer said smugly. 'Everything is owned by A.V.U., a separate entity in its own right.'

'That means it's local business, Dad,' said his amused son. 'Your translation machine must be on the blink, if you didn't pick that up. A.V.U. will be in the draw with all the other assets of the planet.'

The lawyer studied the paperwork. He blanched to his lips and called an emergency board meeting immediately.

'You moron, you cretin, you apology for a half-wit,' the director stuttered. His face had gone a dark shade of puce and a tic jumped in the veins outstanding on his forehead. 'What sort of lawyer are you that you didn't pick up that A.V.U. became an asset of the planet. If we lose control of A.V.U. we're beggared and stranded on this godforsaken planet for the rest of our lives!'

'We signed A.V.U. to gain the extra profits,' the lawyer said sharply.

'Which won't be ours if the annual lottery goes against us,' snarled the accountant.

'We can also lose control of our lives,' the lawyer pointed out coldly. 'If we don't win more assets, we have nothing. If we have nothing, our labour is up for grabs.'

There was a shocked silence.

'I'm going to wait out the results of this lottery off planet,' the director decided. 'We could be trapped for the rest of our lives if the lottery takes A.V.U.'

There was heartfelt and relieved agreement. They all had business that required their personal attention off planet. However, there was no way to get off planet. Everything was closed down, and no-one was around to work anything. The transport people were apologetic.

'Everything on the planet has stopped because of the festival of our Lady of Fortune.'

The accountant remembered his space yacht, but it like every other asset on the planet had been disabled and frozen, until after the Lady of Fortune week was over, by which time it could have a new owner.

The board of directors, like every other soul on the planet, spent the entire week on their knees in the temple watching the figures scroll up. Four days later their figures scrolled up. A.V.U. was awarded to citizenship numbers other than theirs. The citizenship numbers against the palaces and beautiful homes, labour and other assets were not theirs either.

The director was the worst off. Owing to a few unfortunate experiences with his previous wives, all his assets were in the company

name. This meant that his citizenship number came up under the credit system. He owed twelve months labour at six hours a day.

'Ditch digging at the sewerage system,' he roared. 'I'll appeal. They can't make me do this.'

One of the lawyer's sons gained twelve months work in one of the A.V.U.'s retail outlets. His other son was given ownership of a yacht marina, and the lawyer and his wife won a modest house nearby. The accountant landed the proprietorship of a trekking company somewhere in the back mountains of the planet. The secretary received a thriving hotel.

The lawyer struggling up from his cramped position was vaguely aware of the screaming of the director's glamorous wife. The director, being canny had not put his wife's name on anything jointly owned, so their numbers had come up separately, as if she was a single person. One of the other female worshippers had just explained in explicit detail what being in the service for twelve months as a Lady of Fortune priestess entailed.

The lawyer became immersed immediately in running the new business with his youngest son, so it was several weeks before the news filtered down to the ocean beach where they were now settled. The ex director, bereft of his wealth, power and assets, and guilt ridden from the reproaches screamed at him by his latest wife, had committed suicide rather than do his twelve month's credit of work.

The year went quickly. Life seemed to have a zest to it and an enjoyment that it never had before, the lawyer decided. He liked puttering around with the boats and the water. Also he had adopted the local population's philosophy, that Lady Fortune controlled life, and nothing was worth worrying about. There was a reunion after the next annual temple week. The accountant looked tanned, fit and alert. The secretary had acquired a red tinge to his nose and a look of tolerant good humour. The lawyer explained what they hadn't realised earlier.

'It was never a religion. We had it translated wrong. The entire planet is hooked on the laws of chance. Everything is thrown up on the planetary computer like a gigantic lottery, smaller assets once a week to keep the population interested and amused, and the entire assets of the planet turned topsy turvy once a year.'

'No wonder the Federation B's were sniggering,' the accountant agreed, but he said it with amusement rather than bitterness. 'They knew we would only have control until the main lottery. All the same, I still call a system that worships chance with such fanatical devotion a religion.'

'It works very well for this planet,' the secretary said. 'I've met a good cross section of the population, and they are all happy and contented. What they lose one year, they gain the next, and all this shifting around of ownership of the various assets means that everyone has to keep learning new skills and new trades to survive. As the social status goes up and down with the lottery, no-one dares try exploitation in case they end up on the receiving end the following year.'

'Meaning life doesn't get boring,' the lawyer said with a grin. 'We're moving on to a dairy farm tomorrow.'

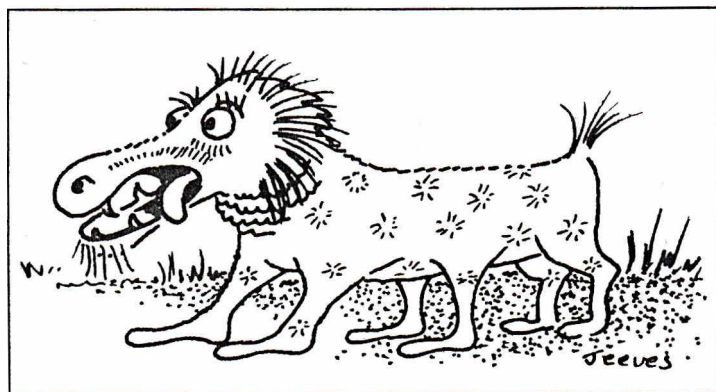
'I'm running a private hospital,' the secretary said. 'Should be a break from my over-friendly patrons in the pub.'

The two ex-powerful and rich shareholders of A.V.U. looked at the accountant.

'I've been given a racetrack to run for twelve months.' He raised his glass. 'Here's to our Lady of Fortune. Long may she reign.'

The religious toast was drunk in reverent silence, and if the ghost of the ex-director of A.V.U. was still screaming, no-one was listening.

the end



THE YANKEE PRIVATEER #20

by Buck Coulson

I was wondering what in the world I could write about for this column, but there is a providence which looks after fan columnists. On March 18, I had a heart attack and an automatic column subject, once I escaped from the hospital to write it.

This was my second heart attack; my first one happened 9 years ago, and the results were that one of the arteries supplying the heart was totally blocked, "but you don't have to have a bypass because that part of the heart is dead anyway." A second artery was 90% blocked, and the third was 50% blocked. But it did prove to some fans that I *did* have a heart; there had been some speculation on the point.

I was lucky on this one in that I was walking across the street in downtown Hartford City when it hit, and one can't be more than 10 blocks from anywhere in town in that location. I was going to Medicare offices anyway, so I went ahead, and when two nitroglycerine tablets seemed to have no effect, they called emergency squad - bad publicity to have Medicare patients dying in the offices. Our doctor's office is across the street from the hospital, so I had a "clot-buster" (some esoteric medical technology for you there) injected within a half-hour of the first attack. Worst part of that hospital stay was having to lie flat on my back and use urinal and bedpan, but it only lasted one day. Dr. Dudgeon then sent me down to Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis for an evaluation of the damage. Hospital wanted to send me in an ambulance; Dudgeon overruled them and let Juanita drive me down, making a few acid comments about the amount of comfort and medical attention available in an ambulance. (Those ambulance cots are pretty hard; I wasn't in one long enough for a real judgement, but I was glad to have a car for a 90-mile ride.)

Methodist is huge; about two city blocks long, one wide and one high, in spots; different areas have different numbers of stories. Settling in wasn't bad, except being permanently attached to a Heparin drip (a blood thinner). It was mounted on a tubular steel framework on wheels, and when I went to the bathroom, it went along, reluctantly. I started calling it "Matilda" because it waltzed with me everywhere I went. At least I was allowed to go to the bathroom, instead of being restricted to bed.

The first night taught me what hospitals mean by "round-the-clock-care". Between 10:30 PM and 6:30 AM, I had a constant stream of visitors. A blood sample. An EKG. (I believe that's short for "electrocardiogram", in which case the inventor must have been German in order to get those initials.) Another blood sample. A nurse coming in to shut off Matilda, saying I was getting too much blood thinner, and she'd be back in an hour to turn it back on. And was... Another blood sample. I told the black technician that I didn't know of any black vampires and he reminded me of "Blacula" and took the blood anyway. A blood pressure test. "I don't have any blood pressure; all those blood samples got all my blood". Apparently she hadn't heard that one before and chuckled while taking the test. Another EKG. And finally - another blood sample. By then I knew why I was getting all the blood thinners; they had to have enough blood to go around. Finally dawn - and breakfast. Whether there is sleep for the wicked I don't know, but there is very little for hospital patients.

A week before the heart attack I'd banged the back of my left hand into something, bled a little, and a scab formed. With all the blood thinners, every scab on my body fell off and I leaked at every pore, practically. My hand really poured blood for awhile, but finally stopped; maybe I did run out.

Hospital food was actually pretty good. My roommate didn't like it, but then he didn't seem to like much of anything. He had blood pressure and diabetes problems, same as me, claimed he took 24 pills a day, was about my height and weighed 300 pounds, disliked the food because it wasn't as rich as he was used to, and spent his time arguing with his wife in person and with various people over the phone. (My ideal weight, the summer I worked in a warehouse, was 180, my highest was 230 and my present was 160 before I went into hospital.) He also wanted an instant diagnosis and cure.

After a couple of days, I was ready to leave, but they weren't ready to let me go; I had to have a catheterization and a stress test, and the heart specialist was talking open-heart surgery and bypasses. She - and Dudgeon - assumed that the 90% blocked artery had closed up entirely and was the cause of the second heart attack, thus leaving me with only one artery supplying the heart. She also suspected an enlarged heart. The catheterization was easy; I went to sleep in the middle of it, though not before hearing the doctor comment that he was running into something on the first try and they'd better start over on the other side of the groin. The stress test was scheduled for Tuesday but nobody showed up, and I was annoyed. There is an old comic song I heard as a boy:

"Eleven more months and ten more days, I'll be out of the calaboose;

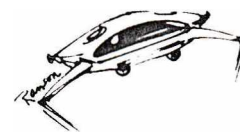
Eleven more months and ten more days and they're gonna turn me loose!" It came rather forcibly to mind.

Wednesday morning the specialist came in, looking a bit stunned. It seems that not only had the arteries not closed up any further, but they'd improved since the test 9 years ago; one was pretty much dead, but the others were only 70% and 40% blocked. She'd rescheduled the stress test for that morning and told me as soon as it was over, I could go; I didn't have to wait until she saw the results of the test. After the first heart attack, I missed two conventions on doctor's orders; this time Juanita asked about our going to Millennicon on Friday, and the doctor said go ahead, as long as I didn't do any driving or heavy lifting. So we went, and I had a good time. It still took until Wednesday noon to get out of the hospital; I still had needles semi-permanently imbedded in various part of my anatomy and they had to be removed. No walking off with hospital property....

The fun came after I got out. One of the tires on the car had gone flat as Juanita pulled into the parking garage, and a nice young man removed it and put the spare on for her. We stopped at the Miesels for a light lunch and to return the books they'd loaned me (THE SIEGE OF MALTA and Spike Milligan's war memoirs) and headed on north. Got onto the interstate, I-69, and at 116th St., not even out of the city, the spare blew out, leaving us with 4 wheels and 3 tires. Juanita had to walk about a mile to a gas station, which had no mechanic. The woman clerk phoned to several garages until she found one willing to come out, haul the car in, and provide a good used tire in our size. We got home about dusk, and pretty well exhausted. (Incidentally, while I was sitting in the car with hundreds of vehicles driving past me, one of them did stop; an old pickup truck with two kids in it. I said thanks, but unless they had a tyre our size they wouldn't be able to do anything, and they commiserated and drove on.) Two days later, we drove to Dayton, OH, for Millennicon, without incident. She also had to load and unload the car at home, though we got a convention gofer to unload it at Dayton.

And that's what I did on my vacation....

- Buck Coulson



MAGAZINES: The Lightweights

by James Verran

Magpies are colloquially defined as random collectors. By necessity, writers are magpies; that is, they collect diverse information in the hope it may later prove useful. Writers draw inspiration from many sources and the ability to access, verify, then use information is an essential skill. The intention of this article is to suggest a source that may have been overlooked.

The proportion of writing time spent on research may be considerably reduced by having the necessary reference materials on hand. Regardless of whether they are begged, borrowed or bought, magazines offer the financially challenged writer the widest resource for the least outlay.

Subscriptions to periodicals are invariably costly and the storage of the accumulated magazines presents a further problem. Selective buying from newsagents will alleviate both the financial outlay and the storage problem. It is not unreasonable to peruse magazines for useful articles or features before deciding to buy. Publishers want their readers to continue buying their products, so a flick through to the "Coming in the Next Issue" plug is often worthwhile. Failing this, many popular magazines are available in major libraries -- choose the subject and browse at your leisure -- free.

Assuming that articles in specialist magazines are written by contributors with an intimate knowledge of the subject matter, they may be expected to impart more accurate and certainly more up-to-date information than many other publications. To test this, a check of entries on a familiar topic or region in any encyclopedia will reveal omissions and occasionally, misinformation. Logically, it must be expected that entries on less well-known topics will contain similar inaccuracies. While conscientious writers strive for accuracy, their well-researched efforts are often thwarted by editorial pruning: a good reason to avoid relying on a single reference source. Regardless of your requirements, there will surely be more than one magazine published in your chosen field.

The magazines reviewed here have been chosen because SF also encompasses the wider genre of Speculative Fiction: SF is frequently more speculative than scientific. Astronomy magazines have been included because much SF is about humankind's expansion into the most challenging physical frontier -- space. Some knowledge of deep space bodies is essential to Speculative/Science Fiction writers. Although, given that 55 light years is the limit for unaided viewing of G (Sol) type stars, we are probably stuck with the SF clichés: Tau Ceti and Alpha Centauri, or Epsilon Eridani (K type) and possibly, despite its invisibility to the unaided eye, the wandering M type, Barnard's Star. Aside from these, usually only the brightest (naked eye) stars have actual names. Of the rest, the majority bear Greek letter classifications according to their apparent brightness.

ANALOG Science Fiction & Fact is readily available over the counter for around \$6.85. While predominantly fiction, it frequently contains hard-science articles of value to SF writers. As with most foreign publications, the currency adjustment and transfer fees discourage many would-be subscribers. Nevertheless, it is often worth buying on the strength of a single article, or ordering in to ensure that a follow-up piece is not missed. Stan's editorials make better reading than his rejection slips any day.

ASTRONOMY, monthly at around \$4.50, thoughtfully contains a centrefold, Southern Sky Chart and list of astronomical events two months ahead of its North American publication date. This

concession to Southern Hemispherites must account for its popularity in Australasia. The special features on stellar phenomena, by informed writers, while often speculative, are a good source of story inspiration. It also contains dozens of mouthwatering hardware advertisements for the practical astronomy buff or the enthusiastic dreamer.

ASTRONOMY NOW, not to be confused with the previously mentioned publication, is a British magazine selling for \$5.45. Also highly recommended as an authoritative source of astronomical facts and statistics.

FINAL FRONTIER, The Magazine of Space Exploration. For \$7.85, this bimonthly is not always easy to find, but most newsagents will order it on request. The plethora of advertisements in this magazine prove that space junk is not limited to Earth orbit. Although it usually contains some excellent material for those critical pieces of trivia to round out a story, it represents questionable value for money because of its high advertisement content.

NEW SCIENTIST, weekly, selling for around \$3.75 is a British publication "facelifted" for Australasian readers. Despite occasional trouble with finding enough current material, the diverse subject matter must bring it close to pleasing everyone. Its well written articles are concise and in no way elitist. Overachievers are also catered for in job advertisements toward the end of each issue.

OMNI. This, widely read, hard science magazine currently sells for \$6.95. It contains a smorgasbord of feature articles, some excellent fiction and, naturally, dozens of advertisements. Disappointingly, most of the advertisements have nothing to do with science or technology and would be better suited to Playboy. Many of the articles deal with increasingly tiresome environmental issues -- preaching to the converted and all that.

POPULAR SCIENCE, at \$4.95 encapsulates many new technological developments in pictures with minimal text. This misnamed magazine is aimed at feral consumers with a passion for technological durables. With brand names and prices brazenly displayed, the scientific content is, in the main, limited to beating the drum of the particular featured product. The mandatory environmental messages insinuated into most articles are blatantly included to enhance the perceived desirability of the products. For those who "came down in the last shower", there are a multitude of dubious classifieds in the back pages. In short, nothing more than an interesting catalogue; but then, writers find inspiration in the most unlikely places.

SCIENCE FICTION AGE, is a relative newcomer. At \$8.50, its value depends largely on the reader's requirements. It contains a mixture of reviews, the odd hard science or technology feature, some variable SF and, of course, plenty of advertisements. Often worth buying for the interesting features about and by SF personalities.

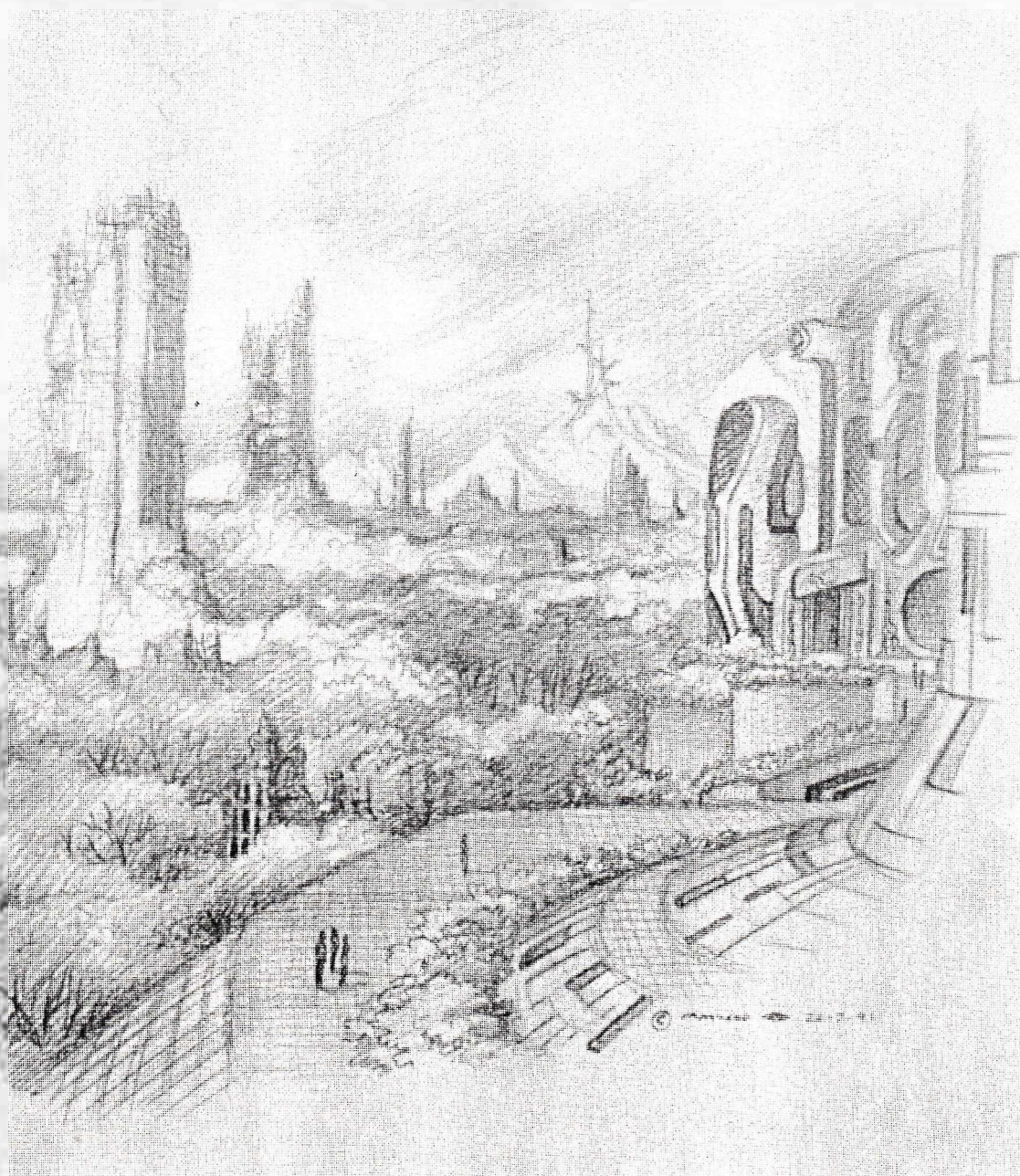
SOUTHERN SKY, a bimonthly Australian publication. The price, \$5.00 and its locally oriented content are big plusses. With surprisingly few advertisements in its 60+ pages it represents excellent value. A magazine more for the amateur astronomer than SF writer; although, there are general interest snippets on recent space missions and projects within some of the articles. The March/April issue contained an excellent article on the development of Siding Spring Observatory from its genesis in the late 1950s. Another, on a planned International Antarctic Balloon Observatory, is a fascinating insight into the quest for better "seeing" locations. The IABO project proposes to tether an unmanned dirigible, equipped with a 2.5 metre telescope at an altitude of 5 km in a yet to be chosen Antarctic location.

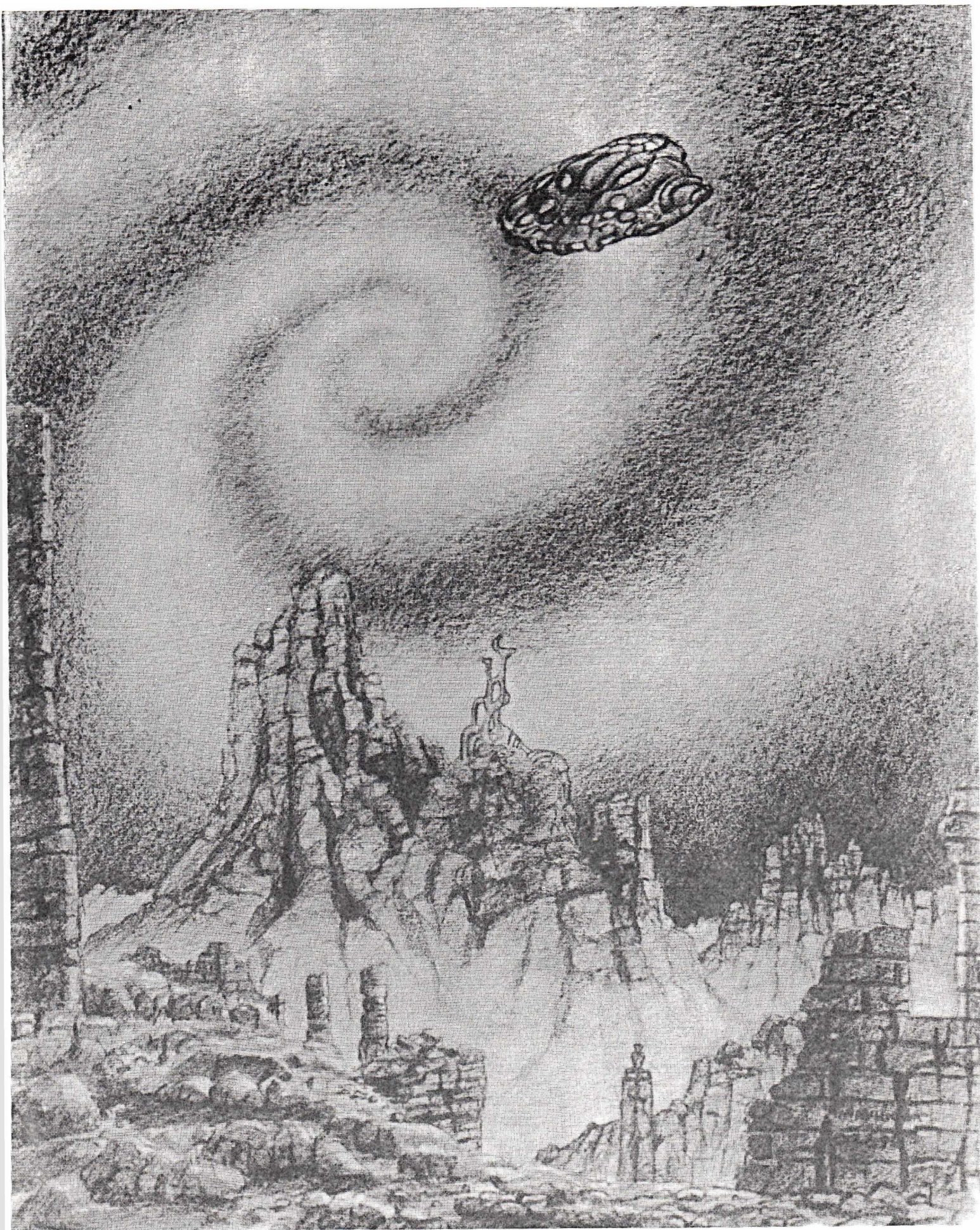
SPACEFLIGHT, The International Magazine of Space and Astronautics, published monthly by The British Interplanetary Society, provides 40+ pages of vital trivia for speculative writers. Approximately \$5.70 in Oz. Packed with facts about recent and current space missions with details for projected launches, it is one of the better magazines in the genre because of its international content. A useful resource for details to authenticate "historically accurate" events in stories or where trivia may be needed to validate a story background. Many of the articles are speculative, in that they deal with the aspirations of the people behind the missions. Each December's issue contains a comprehensive index of previously published articles, which provides a research trail to earlier featured subject matter.

(Cont. p. 22)

A PORTFOLIO

by Mark McLeod

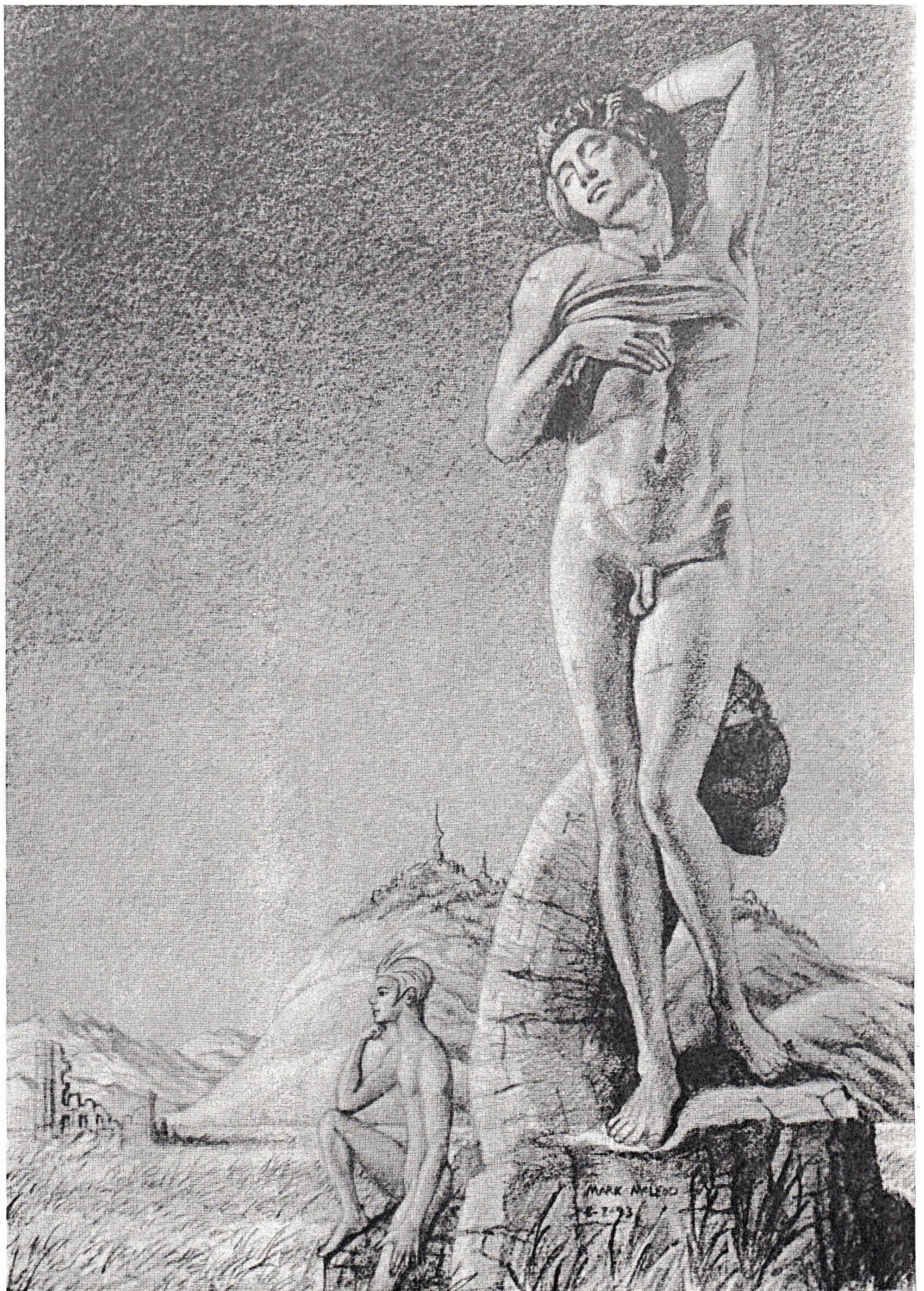












IN DEPTH #11

by Bill Congreve

During 1990, when I was living and working in a London pub and just beginning to develop ambitions about this publishing business some of us are involved in, I spoke about advertising revenue with the advertising manager of a trade journal. I described a magazine: 2000 paid circulation, national newsstand distribution, a very high proportion of computer users, particularly of word processor packages and printers, amongst its readers, above average education and intelligence amongst the readers, and also an above average earning potential. I then asked what a full page ad in such a publication would be worth.

Answer? 500 pounds per page. 1200 Australian dollars.

I told the guy I was talking about a science fiction magazine, and he said: "So what?"

Before I get on to a discussion of why I feel this ideal is unreasonable, let me describe the magazine the guy worked for. It was a biochemical industry trade journal. Manufacturers would describe their products and then have the opportunity to advertise on facing pages. The journal was basically an index with specifications and independent reviews of products available in the industry. The thing was only ever distributed to those people in the industry who had need of the information. Every reader of the journal, which was quite comprehensive, was a customer of somebody in the book. Obviously, this kind of captive audience is a publisher's dream.

Some magazines in the Australian market, ie things like WOMAN'S DAY with its paid circulation of over a million, almost have the option of paying for all production and royalty costs with advertising revenue before the thing even goes on sale. This is the secret of magazine publishing, and also one reason why the prices of such mass circulation publications are so low. What about a science fiction magazine? The audience demographic has been pretty well established by Locus over the years. Above average education (either studying for, or already possessing a university education), typically male, though this has changed radically in the last couple of decades, above average income, is an innovator when it comes to new technology, is a decision maker, is ambitious in career and lifestyle... We're all familiar with this profile, which is only now beginning to change to exclude younger people who are becoming more dedicated to new forms of electronic entertainment.

We're describing a person who is not easily influenced. What is the role of advertising today? Does advertising merely inform the reader/viewer of available products? Or does advertising seek to persuade people to purchase? Does it fill a merely informative role? Or is it one of the basic crutches on which our consumption driven economy rests? When the advertising bubble bursts, as it can do when put under pressure from budget conscious persons who ask themselves "Do I really want this?" then the result can be recessionary. But the chief point is does conventional advertising influence the SF reader? My contention is that it doesn't. The average SF reader is quite well aware of what they want from life, and if it doesn't include a new pair of running boots, or a can of that soft drink every day, then bad luck for the advertiser.

Notice the change in advertising in SF magazines over the last two decades. The cigarettes, alcohol, cars and the like have disappeared and been replaced with ads from publishers informing readers of new SF books, and stuff from various mints offering scale replicas of The Enterprise. The slant of the advertising has changed,

and advertising has all but disappeared from the smaller print run magazines such as Pulpouse.

The advertising industry has given up on the SF magazine with their mass-market advertising because it is a bad risk. I don't feel this is deliberate, but I do feel it's one of those trends which become slowly obvious over time. Is this just a conspiracy theory? Let's take a case study from another medium: television. Do you remember the days when two lovable old lunatics who ran the bar at the RSL club and operated the local plumbing service appeared in A Country Practice every couple of weeks? Do you remember why they were sacked from the show? There was a perception at Channel 7 that these characters weren't attracting younger viewers, and never mind all the older viewers (more able to make up their own minds) who enjoyed the show and gave it solid ratings, it was the adolescent audience who watch TV at 7.30 PM in the evening (who are more easily influenced by fads and fashions) that the advertisers were after, and that the show had to attract. Hence the cynical and bloody minded decision to write Cookie and his mate out of the show, dump older viewers, and try for younger ones. Never mind story logic and continuity as the local police sergeant retired from the force to run the bar at the RSL. (If you believe that, you'll believe anything!)

So why did Channel 7 sack a show which, despite all, still rates so well? (But with the wrong audience profile to attract advertisers.) Why did Channel 7 plan to replace A Country Practice with a show set in the same location with similar storylines featuring much younger characters? Now that Channel 10 has bought the show, why are they aiming for the younger viewer with a younger cast? My own feeling is that TV stations make money by providing a service, and if they stop providing a service then their revenue is in danger as viewers will eventually vote with their feet: they'll watch something else, maybe go to the cinema, see a rock concert or, heaven forbid, settle down with a good book! To allow the advertising industry to compromise this provision of a service for short term gain means that the industry will eventually become unproductive for both as the punters abandon it for other entertainment and information media.

The point I wish to make here is that the advertising industry does have a perception of value for money, but that they are often so short sighted and ethically compromised that they will abuse that perception to their own detriment. (But then the advertisers can move to the new media, the old media that have had their ability to compete compromised by the advertisers for the sake of short term gain - the holy dollar - is not as capable of that movement.) Magazines that wish to attract advertising money have got to show advertisers why they should spend their money in a particular magazine. Look at different ads in different magazines. Penthouse features ads aimed at male yuppies: expensive running shoes, hi-fi systems, image alcohol ads, tyres for off-road vehicles that will never leave a city street, VCR equipment, and tacky porno merchants. New Idea features fashion, perfume, lifestyle icons, cooking utensils, etc. (Don't women buy alcohol and hi-fi's? I'm not saying it has to make sense - I'm just trying to show why satisfying the advertising industry is important. Even if they are a backward, sexist, fascist bunch of yuppie twits who think they live - and everybody else in the world lives - in a My Three Sons episode in 1950s Hollywood.) Ads in NATIONAL EQUIRE? Imagine every snake oil merchant in the country looking for gullible people who want to be conned. Now imagine a publisher willing to make a profit by exploiting both. Ahh, the joys of a democracy.

So what is the message for editors/publishers of SF magazines? The management of the advertising industry is staid, conservative and unimaginative. Be prepared to do their thinking for them. Editors must be able to show the advertising industry how they can make money from and for their clients by advertising with you. The advertising industry is potentially a massive part of a magazine's income. A magazine needs to think of the advertising industry as just another market. Show them the magazine is a good risk.

Most important message for publishers and editors of an SF magazine here is: don't prostitute the contents of your magazine. In the marketplace is a bunch of pernickety, hard to please SF readers who can spot the difference and who are perfectly willing to tell all their friends. That's what SF fandom is for, right? If a magazine changes to please advertisers then the compromise will be noticed. This is the core of the problem in the first place and it has implications. Firstly, it means that the published product should have a

reputation for excellence, and that what must change is the kind of approach made to advertisers. A magazine must be able to sell its readership to the advertising industry. Who are the readers? What is it about the readers that can be sold to advertisers?

The key to this lies not in conventional advertising wisdom, but with readers of SF magazines. What is the magazine's audience demographic? If an editor doesn't know this in precise detail, there's no point starting. What are the readers' needs? How can an advertisement be designed so that it will fill those needs?

Let's look that profile of the SF reader again. Does it remind you a little of the kind of person who might be reading the trade journal I mentioned in the introduction? I don't mean that they are identical, but are they similar people with similar patterns of purchasing? With similar motives for purchasing? And advertising space in that journal is worth 500 pounds a page. What influences the pocket strings of an SF reader? Need, product information, product comparisons, value, new entertainment experiences, new technology and the option of playing with it. Science fiction readers are innovators. At a time when a large percentage of the population has never used an ATM at a bank, I doubt if there is a reader of *Aurealis*, or of *Analog*, who hasn't. At a time when most of the population has still never used a computer, or may actively be scared of using one, let alone understands the role they fill in today's society, the average *Analog* reader is just as likely to buy the bits and pieces and build their own.

Hands up which Mentor readers don't own a PC with word processor and printer. Most readers will have a games package as well.

Even innovators and decision makers impulse buy. Does this sound contradictory? I might decide tonight I need a new computer tomorrow, but if I do, I'll make certain I get what I want, and I'm an educated enough user to be aware of what I want. Am I, as a consumer, sounding a little more like a reader of the above trade journal? I wonder how ads are presented in that? I never saw a copy, but I could guess. Think of an ad that educates the reader about the product, that shows the reader how the product is capable of filling needs, perhaps provide independent assessment of the product. It sounds a little more all the time like how motor vehicles and computers are sold, doesn't it? Would an advertisement for a word processor package designed like an NRMA new vehicle report tell you enough about that word processor to decide if you want to buy it? I'm sure it would.

It is this profile of an SF reader as an innovator and decision maker which can be sold to the advertising industry. Suddenly, the SF magazine isn't an unknown anymore. It may be a small market to an advertiser, but it need not be one the advertiser must wonder about, for a precedent exists.

The lesson for SF magazine publishers is this: know your audience. You already know how to satisfy that audience's needs to some extent, or you wouldn't be in business. You must then be able to sell that knowledge to advertisers and show them how they may be able to profit by it. Don't rely on conventional advertising wisdom, because conventional advertising in SF magazines is ignored by the readers. Be innovative and creative with your ideas. Don't just approach manufacturers, but talk to advertising agencies as well.

The above is written from the point of view of a person with a BA in Communications (processes and effects), but who has never published a magazine in his life. Am I being too cynical? Too theoretical? I'd be very interested in what other people think.

#

DOUBLE GOD; Veronica Hart; novel; 445 + xii pp; 1994; Mandarin pb; \$12.95.

Ignore the cover. The book is intriguing.

Mary Warner is an attractive fifteen year old with a passion for walking a neighbour's dog, named 'Terror', and for babysitting a child named Josh. One day she decides to do both at the same time....

Here begins Mary's nightmare.

Mary's parents seek to escape suburban Sydney to the tranquillity of the Blue Mountains in an attempt to find an environment which will cure Mary's mind. But the house they purchase has its own dark history.

Here begins the Warner family nightmare.

There is plenty of misdirection, there are some truly gruesome ideas - I particularly love the hand-carved, dried mud statues and their real-life models. The book thrills right from the beginning. There is some nicely subversive thinking about child-raising and the value of the medical community in cases of juvenile mental disturbance. The ending, when it comes, is horrendous and unexpected, but has been beautifully established by what has gone before.

My only complaints are that it's a little long, but perhaps that is the publisher wanting a book big enough to call a 'bestseller', and that it has a heavy dependence on the rhetorical question rather than precise description as a device to draw in the reader that made this reviewer wonder if it all wasn't just a little too hysterical and, as a result, if the writer was taking it all seriously. There are places herein where it's obvious a truly strange imagination is at play and is heartily enjoying the process.

Hint: when you've finished, and not before, go back and re-read the prologue. It works equally well as an epilogue and becomes marvellously effective as such, yet logic dictates it must appear at the beginning of the text. With this kind of trickery being used so well, I'm heartily looking forward to the next Hart tome.

Recommended.

Quite apart from the text reviewed above, the packaging of DOUBLE GOD invites comment, most of it unfavourable. The silver foil of the book's title on the cover and spine has been printed over the laminating - it comes off in your hands while reading. Wash your hands after reading this book! There is an embarrassing typo on the contents page. There is a photo of the author, Veronica Hart, inside the front cover. Veronica Hart has spoofed herself up for the photo; just as the prose style of the book doesn't quite take seriously the subject matter, the writer seems to be making fun of the book's publishing. Would you buy a horror novel from a lady who looks more at home as a primary level school teacher in a Leave it to Beaver episode? Who looks like she is sitting in a tastefully furnished house in a well-to-do leafy suburb pretending to be a rich and famous author wearing a wig when nobody has heard her name before? This person is 'The Mistress of Terror'. Do you expect this person to write something scary? With street credibility?

On the front cover we have the blurb "the new bestseller from...". To the best of my knowledge this is Hart's first published fiction of any kind. Pan Macmillan did this trick with Graeme Hogue's GHOST BEYOND EARTH. The same kind of blurb, that is. I'm certain there is somebody in the offices of these publishing houses who is capable of writing a blurb which is both true and which doesn't deliberately mislead the reader as the blurbs on both these books do.

The cover art and style looks like a Leigh Nichols or Andrew Klavan title. (Hogue's book was styled after Dean Koontz.) The content is firmly in Virginia Andrews territory (Though more fiendishly crafted and original.). The back cover blurb begins with "In the tradition of Mary Higgins Clark..." Can't they make up their minds? Or are they just covering as many bets as possible? The packaging of DOUBLE GOD doesn't create an "identity" for the book, even as a bestseller, as it is too busy borrowing from the 'identity' of other works.

Is all this necessary?

#

GRAFFITI; Dirk Strasser; novel?; 47 pp; 1993; Ashton Scholastic tpb; I think I paid \$4.95 but I can't remember because Australian publishers don't put the price on kids' books.

Noted with interest.

For some reason this picked up a Ditmar nomination for best Australian long fiction, but then the Ditmar nominations have been a joke for years now. Why GRAFFITI and not Strasser's fantasy novel ZENITH?

An effective juvenile horror novelette. The street kids of Melbourne are disappearing and nobody cares. Elements of an alternate world situation, but the nasties in the alternate world are nasty, also rather Lovecraftian. Good characters caught in a situation most would identify with, and who struggle to redeem themselves. Give it a try or buy it for your kids.

#

THE NEW AGE; Martin Middleton; novel; 318 + xviii pp; 1993; Pan Macmillan pb; \$11.95

Bloody awful. The bad guys are so stupid it's a wonder they don't forget to eat breakfast and starve to death.

Middleton's prose is still emotionless and semantically compromised. The characters still stand around and tell each other the plot with dialogue that reads like a FAST FORWARD spoof of a Rugby League commercial. Hasn't Middleton twigged to the trick of reading his stuff out loud to himself as a kind of road test?

The time is several hundred years after the events of the first Custodian trilogy. The bad guys are pretty well in charge of the Custodian universe, and there is only one Usare, the semi-immortal weaver, Lyn, left to combat them. There is the obligatory group of young warriors who unintentionally end up on a quest with Lyn. There's a magic weapon. Hey, this bit is original - it isn't a sword, it's a mace! Obviously there's a prophecy. One bunch from the first novel, the amphibian Plastrons that were dragged out in the first trilogy to jazz up the action whenever the heroes travelled by ship are now revealed to be a deeply misunderstood but noble ancient civilisation. (Plastrons, by the way, are almost invincible - unless they're fighting the hero.) Towards the end of the novel we come to a place where a whole nation of well-armed Plastrons has been simply, easily and unexplainedly wiped out in their underwater home by the bad guys (humans). The same bad guys then find themselves unable to defeat a mere platoon of Plastrons with a handful of human allies on dry ground.

Why are the bad guys doing all this? For their own ambition? To win fame and fortune, to find out who's going to be king of the shitpile this week? Next week? No. To reawaken somebody whose power and ambition will turn them into mindless minions. Told you they were smart.

There are a couple of positive points. Somebody completely irrelevant to all these derivative fantasy plot elements is developing technology. Though there is no apparent economic or manufacturing base for any new technology, it appears there will soon be a new player in the Custodian universe. I hope Middleton will do something promising with the idea.

Middleton's characters are more strongly drawn, though still stereotyped. The fight sequences are more convincing: the ever-present rattle of dice as the heroes of the first trilogy battled to victory with their accumulated role-playing brownie points has faded into the background. A thin ray of promise that things may be better next time is held out to potential buyers of the next book in the series.

- Bill Congreve

THE LIGHTWEIGHTS (cont from p.17)

Advertisements are sparse and strictly in-house or "shop" related, resulting in a low page count. Considering the dearth of advertisements, SPACE FLIGHT provides more pages of solid information than most magazines with double its page count.

21.C -- where does a name like that fit into an alphabetical list of magazines? At \$9.95, 21.C would hardly qualify as a budget item were it not a quarterly publication. However, it begs inclusion here, if only to boost the science quota, and for its Australian content. As the name suggests, it reports on science and technology, with a heavy environmental message, leading into the near future. Some high-profile columnists get to stomp on their soap boxes. Unfortunately, much of the science and technology is trivialized by lack of depth; but given the short attention span of the average techno-nerd, short, shallow articles may suit its readership -- whatever became of the Clever Country? Not an easy magazine to acquire, but copies are sold in most ABC Shops.

There seems little need to review any of the popular computer magazines, but suffice it to mention that they are always a potential resource for SF writers. Articles on probable developments in the field of computers often read like works of speculative fiction. While some developments in the computer field seem inspired by SF, a good many SF ideas have originated from such material.

For practical reasons, only magazines readily available without subscription were selected for this review. Several are

somewhat devalued by advertisements, but publishers have to subsidize the high cost of glossy colour, somehow. Unfortunately, a couple of recent publications could not be obtained in time for inclusion, but astute researchers always check previously unseen titles. Happy hunting!

POETRY, TOO: 2

CHILDBIRTH ON A CIVILISED PLANET

Emotionless, the doctor applied tools.
The Foetus extracted,
they wheeled her away.
Although she could not move,
and could not relieve herself,
they did not check upon her
until the next day.

The aerobus arrived
to take her to the
nursery planet,
where she would tend her offspring;
The matriarch checking
daily, weekly,
to see that she did so.

She did not rest.
She could not heal.
But there was no help for her,
she had resigned her rights
when she had chosen
to join the gene pool.

- Cecelia Drewer

THE DOUBLE RAINBOW OF DUTY

tomorrow's paper
would make me rich today he
said kicking ashes
of all the yesterdays his
time machine keeps right
on bringing stupid as dog
thinking it is loved

- Steve Sneyd



A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM 1935-1963

by Vol Molesworth

CHAPTER 3

It was not until two years after Hiroshima that activities were resumed. In June, 1947, Graham B. Stone who had been stationed with the Air Force in the Australian tropics, returned to Sydney; and while awaiting discharge, discussed with Vol Molesworth the prospect of reviving activities.

The immediate problems were threefold: (1) to provide a meeting-place for local fans; (2) to link up fans outside Sydney; and (3) to obtain supplies of U. S. magazines and the hardcover cascade. The pair contacted personally or by letter various former fans, and the response was enthusiastic.

The 78th meeting of the Futurian Society of Sydney was held on August 9, 1947 - the second anniversary of Nagasaki. Mrs Laura Molesworth, Eric Russell and Stirling Macoboy brought the membership to five. It was decided to meet monthly; admit as associates fans living "more than 100 miles from Sydney"; publish a news-bulletin THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN; and build up a club library²⁰. Russell was elected Director, Molesworth Secretary-Treasurer. According to the minutes, it was unanimously agreed that meetings should dispense quickly with business and then be thrown open for informal discussion. "No form of intense external activity of a political or other nature would be encouraged."

The first issue of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN appeared in September, 1947, in a duplicated four-page folded foolscap format. Fifteen issues, the later ones running to eight and once twelve pages, were published up to December, 1948. Between 100 and 175 copies were distributed through the English-speaking world.

By November, 1947, the membership had doubled and an appreciable quantity of books, magazines, and fanzines, had been donated to the library. The new members were Arthur Haddon, Ralph A. Smith and Stephen Cooper (Sydney), Colin Roden (Newcastle) and Warwick Hockley (Melbourne).

In that month two unrelated but important events occurred. Firstly Capt. K. G. Slater, a British fan, applied for associate membership in the Society. Secondly, Stone and Macoboy discovered that a group of book collectors had been meeting informally for years each Friday at a city coffee house, the Quality Inn. Some of them, including Stan L. Larnach and Harold Lennon, were interested in fantasy.

Slater's application decided members to drop the "of Sydney" from the club's name and henceforth to admit fans living anywhere in the world with the proviso that the use of the Library be restricted to members within the Australasian postal area.

The fifth issue of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN sounded a triumphant note for the New Year. Membership had jumped to 17, the newcomers being William D. Veney (just back from Army service in Japan), Stan Baillie, S. L. Larnach and Jock McKenna (Sydney).

²⁰ Obviously a valuable idea, the shortage of SF being the main problem. The Library developed with difficulty into the group's useful feature. (G. S.)

Donald H. Tuck (Hobart) and Chas. S. Mustchin (Coolangatta). By February, membership had notched upwards again with the entry of Bruce M. Sawyer (Sydney) and Bob Geappen (Hobart), the latter having paid a flying visit to Sydney.

In March 1948, four Sydney fans, Stone, Macoboy, Russell and Molesworth, formed a syndicate to publish limited editions of science fiction and fantasy. Proposed name of the publishing "house" was Futurian Press, whose first book would be DREAM'S END AND OTHERS, a collection of stories by Allen Connell, from 1936-7 WONDER and 1941 PLANET. Three months later, however, the project was dropped as negotiations for the purchase of a cheap second-hand printing press had fallen through²¹.

Meanwhile, membership was steadily on the increase. P. Glick (Sydney), Roy Williams (Lismore), four Americans and two Canadians brought the total to 27. The Library had grown to 28 books, 71 magazines and 200 fanzines. Veney and Russell had been elected Director and Secretary respectively.

The eighth issue of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN was a special number, provided for distribution at the Toronto S. F. Convention, and in it appeared the following declaration:

"We believe that in the instability of this postwar era the time is ripe for a widening of the scope of fandom. Without desiring to destroy the independence of local fan clubs, we feel that some non-partisan organisation could be set up, to which fan clubs and individual fans in unorganised areas could affiliate. A basis for such a global organisation has been created by the formation of national organisations which in practice overlap. We hope for a truly international body in times to come."

And with it the following prophetic note: "Possibly in the future it may be found advisable to resume the original status of a local club, perhaps as a unit of that world-spanning organisation; but in the postwar revival of fandom we consider that the greatest service is rendered by acting as a blanket organisation."

The rapid growth of the Society was, however, causing some anxiety and at the 89th meeting, held in May, 1948, a unanimous vote restored the original name, Futurian Society of Sydney. Animated discussion took place on the status of the club, some members expressing the idea that it should return to being a purely local group. A motion to limit future membership to "within 100 miles of Sydney" was discussed; no agreement was reached, and the Secretary was instructed to conduct a plebiscite of full members. This resulted in an 11 - 3 decision to continue accepting associate members living anywhere in the world.

Graham B. Stone had now taken over the work of the Secretary and was editing these issues of the club organ.

The addition of A. Dick, Harold Lennon and Harry Brunen (Sydney) had raised the membership to 29 - Stephen Cooper having resigned - and as the Sydney members were not too numerous to conduct meetings at private homes, it was decided to meet on a weekly basis at The Quality Inn. For a while the Thursday night meetings were well attended and very enjoyable. Club business had been cut to a minimum (occupying only two minutes at Meeting 98 held on July 29) and the rest of the night was taken up with discussion, magazine marketing, and chess.

In September, Vol Molesworth became Director, Roy Williams Secretary and P. Glick Treasurer, and the Library, which for the preceding thirteen months had been run by Mrs Molesworth, was taken over by A. Dick.

The formation of a World Science Fiction League, advocated in SYDNEY FUTURIAN #8, received support overseas, and a provisional constitution was drawn up by the Canadian S. F. Association, to become effective when ratified by the four national organisations of Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the U.S.A. A select committee comprising Molesworth, Russell and Williams, had been appointed on September 23 to consider means of Australian representation at the Seventh World Science Fiction Convention at Cincinnati; and this committee was now given the task of examining

²¹ I originally suggested this. I knew a man who had used a hand press before the war and we were to buy it. But he found it had been stolen from his garage while he was away in the Army, so that was that. I don't know about three months. (G.S.)

the proposed W.S.F.L. constitution. After hearing the committee's report, the Society decided at its 110th meeting on November 18 to send the following statement to Canadian organiser, C. J. Bowie-Reed:

"The F.S.S. approves of the principle of a world science fiction league and is willing to support the present move. Due, however, to the present dollar restrictions, Australia could not send any money to the USA or Canada; nor, due to its limited finances, publish an organ for W.S.F.L. with a possible circulation of several hundred. We therefore cannot permit ourselves to be bound by Clause 4(a) of the provisional constitution, which provides for "certain powers or monies" to be delegated to the League. We recommend that a formation of a more loosely-knit organisation be considered, with a view to ascertaining the potential membership in the constituent countries."²²

By the end of 1948, membership had risen to 34. The newcomers were Roger N. Dard, a West Australian; Nick Sointseff, who had migrated to Sydney from Shanghai; John Cooper (Sydney); and two Americans.

The holding of meetings in a coffee inn - caused by the growth of local membership to 14 - was not causing some dissatisfaction. At Meeting 112, held on December 2, Macoboy said that as the Society was becoming more and more a meeting of book collectors interested in fantasy, and less and less a science-fiction club, it might be advantageous to consider the dissolution of the club. Molesworth replied that the Society had done much to publicise Australian fandom overseas, and enunciated several advantages of the club in its existing form, notably the still-expanding Library.

Macoboy also argued that, although associated members were expected to pay dues²³ the only benefit they derived was the small club organ. Lennon said the best idea would be to produce a large, well-printed, quarterly magazine for distribution overseas, and an occasional news-bulletin for domestic consumption. It was finally resolved (on the motion of Sawyer, seconded McKenna) that publication of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN should cease with its 15th issue; and that a committee be set up to plan a larger magazine to be sent abroad.

The discontinuance of THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN was a major tactical error²⁴. The bulletin which replaced it, F.S.S. NEWS, saw only three issues, dated February, July and November, 1949. It carried a masthead designed by Stirling Macoboy, and consisted of two duplicated foolscap sheets stapled together.

In January, 1949, Molesworth announced that owing to pressure of work and study he could not continue as Director. He was replaced by John Cooper, while Lennon became Treasurer and Williams Secretary-Librarian. A Committee consisting of Cooper (ex-officio), Lennon, Macoboy and Russell, was elected to edit the new overseas magazine.

This committee reported back to the 117th meeting, held on February 3, that the magazine would contain about 40 quarto pages and feature articles by F.S.S. members and other fans. It would be named BOOMERANG and its policy would be "to convey an idea of the nature of Australian fandom". Copy was required by April 1. The magazine, however, never appeared.

At the following meeting, Williams resigned the Secretaryship, as he would be studying at night, and Sointseff was elected in his place. Meanwhile, membership had risen to 39, one of the new associates being the British author, A Bertram Chandler, who visited the club during January and February.

The unsuitability of meeting in a coffee inn was emphasised at Meeting 123 (March 3) when Veney asked Director Cooper to suggest to members that meals should be eaten before meetings began, and only coffee or soft drinks while the meeting was in progress. Molesworth asked all members to co-operate in a search for premises suitable for an F.S.S. Clubroom.

²² A few issues of a newsletter appeared, but otherwise nothing came of this idea, showing that the science fiction movement had effectively failed. (G.S.)

²³ In the form of magazines which went into the club library.

²⁴ As the reader will have seen, the main fault throughout this history was a lack of perseverance and continuity. (G.S.)

On March 24 membership reached its peak of 43, the newcomers being Ken Paynter, Val Ackerman and Ian Gray (Sydney) and John C. Park (Perth).

At Meeting 127 (March 31) a letter from Dard and Tuck, suggesting that the Society ask the Government to lift the dollar ban, was read. It was moved that this correspondence be received, and no further action was taken.²⁵

The decreasing formality of the Society was again illustrated at this meeting, when the newly-elected Treasurer, Ken Paynter, suggested that a levy of 10 percent be imposed on all auction sales of magazines conducted by private persons in the club's time. Macoboy protested that 50 percent of meetings were held not because people wanted to discuss science fiction, but because they wanted to buy magazines. Penalising sellers, who created attendance, was improper. The motion was finally carried by a majority of one.

At Meeting 128 (April 7) it was found impossible to recruit a regular minute secretary, and it was therefore decided that in future any suitable person would be appointed to the position for a meeting. The result is that no further minutes are recorded until October 31 - a gap of six months. From the second issue of F.S.S. NEWS, however, we learn that no official meetings were held between May and June, 1949, although fans continued to gather at The Quality Inn on Thursday nights.

On July 7, Molesworth was elected Director, Sointseff Secretary, Paynter Treasurer, and Williams Librarian. Criticising the club's inactivity, Molesworth said that unless some action was taken in the very near future, the club would lose not only its interstate and overseas members, but the support of international fandom generally.

Despite this warning, inactivity prevailed, heightened by the closing down of The Quality Inn in August, 1949. Fans transferred their Thursday night meetings to another coffee inn, the Mariposa (later to become a Chinese restaurant, the Sun Si Gai), where the atmosphere of disunity was intensified by the fans having to sit at various small tables instead of one large one.

At the next recorded meeting, #150, held on October 31, Molesworth stated that members felt that the usual Thursday night gatherings had widened the scope of their interests beyond science fiction fan activities, and that the club should tighten up its policy and membership. To this end, it was thought desirable to hold separate meetings while maintaining friendly relations with the Thursday night group. The Treasurer reported that only Haddon, Lynch, Macoboy, Molesworth, Paynter, Sointseff and Williams were financial. Membership dropped to seven full members and fourteen associates. The following statement of club policy was compiled from members' suggestions:

"The F.S.S. is a group of active science fiction fans meeting to discuss and promote science fiction; to take part in international fan activities; and to publicise F.S.S. activities, and Australian fandom generally, in other countries. Meetings shall be conducted along Parliamentary principles." On Macoboy's motion, seconded by Lynch, the following resolution was carried: "While this organisation welcomes the exchange of magazines among members to assist their reading of science fiction, it emphatically will not consider itself a "magazine market", and no member shall expect to find magazines available for sale at each or any meeting, and no priority shall be expected by members in obtaining magazines from other members in respect of F.S.S. Membership." In view of this, the levy on auction sales imposed eight months earlier, was rescinded.

To this meeting, Macoboy reported that the 1949 U.S. Convention had voted that \$150 be spent to provide books for the F.S.S. Library. He was authorised to express thanks and handle negotiations.

Meanwhile, the Customs Department had been engaged in a blitz on parcels of magazines sent to Australia as gifts²⁶, and at Meeting #152 (held on December 11) it was decided that a deputation should wait on the Minister for Customs to seek a clarification of the position. Support was offered by American fans, some even

²⁵ The group was in a totally powerless position, and could not afford to draw attention to itself. (G.S.)

²⁶ They thought they were being paid for in some way, probably barter arrangements. (G.S.)

suggesting that U.N.O. should be petitioned. Happily, however, the blitz eased off, and the Society decided it would be wisest not to provoke the Customs further. A New Zealand fan, Thomas G. L. Cockcroft, attended this meeting.

On January 26, 1950, Sointseff was elected both Director and Secretary, Paynter Treasurer and Williams Librarian. No further meetings were held until March 26, when it was decided to prepare two double-sided 12 in. records for playing at the Eighth World Convention to be held in Portland, Oregon. These would provide just under 20 minutes speaking time. The discs were duly made, under the supervision of Stirling Macoboy, and created quite a hit at the Convention.²⁷

In April, it was found that fourteen fans, including several F.S.S. members, were doing various courses at the University of Sydney. Accordingly, the Sydney University Futurian Society was formed, but only two or three meetings were held. Thereafter pressure of studies, plus lack of advertising, prevented a quorum being attained, and, in accordance with University rules, the Society automatically ceased to exist.

At the next meeting of the F.S.S., held on May 6, Molesworth reported that Treasurer Paynter had left for England, and Librarian Williams was returning to Lismore. It was decided there would be no point in electing new executives, and Sointseff was authorised to take over the Treasury and Library funds and property for safekeeping. The Society was now virtually defunct.

When Sointseff collected the Library, it was found that during the period of inactivity a considerable number of books and magazines had disappeared. A Meeting called on May 25 and attended by ten fans probed the matter, deciding ultimately that the only action the Society could take was to collect the remnants of the Library and ascertain what was missing. It was determined that the Library had dwindled from 30 books and 287 magazines to six books and 90 magazines!

Although it had taken a catastrophe to bring these ex-members together, an attempt was made to capitalise on the situation and re-establish the club's former membership and activity. An eight-point plan, providing for a strong Chairman, meetings once a month at some place where a single table could be used, reduced fees, better Library facilities, and a regular news bulletin, was put forward. These points were discussed by members and guests, and it was decided that a resuscitation of club activity was both desirable and practical. Accordingly, ten fans (including newcomers Michael McGuinness and David Ritchie) attended a special meeting on June 1.

Veney, who presided, said the Society, if reformed should not interfere with the normal Thursday night meetings²⁸. Six or eight people were turning up regularly to these gatherings and they would continue to do so, come what may. Russell said people turned up Thursday nights to talk, but not necessarily about science fiction. Macoboy said he personally did not want to attend on Thursdays to discuss club matters. Disorderly argument followed on the desirability or otherwise of meeting at the Mariposa or somewhere else.

Molesworth said that to test the feeling of the meeting he would formally move the disbandment of the Society and the dispersal of its property. This was seconded by McGuinness. Opposing the motion, Macoboy said he felt it would be a pity to disband the club after all the effort that had been put into it in the past. "Although I am not interested in organisation I realise that there are people who are," he said. "I feel that the machinery for formal activity exists, and rather than consign it to the scrap-heap we should keep it repaired and oiled." McGuinness, supporting the motion, said that the present gathering seemed to be loaded down with past impressions. "If we could start with a clean sheet we might be able to get something done." Ritchie, opposing, said that a permanent society required a small but important alteration in the Constitution to provide a purpose, political or economic, to benefit members as individuals from the

existence of a corporate body.²⁹

Russell moved, seconded Sawyer, an amendment that the Society be disbanded and its Library administered by a Trust organisation. The speakers for the motion were Russell and Molesworth; against, Macoboy and Ritchie. A motion to apply the gag was defeated 6 - 3. In the resumed debate, Macoboy said the original motion was impossible because it violated all sense of honour. Molesworth said the core of the problem, after 2½ hours of bitter and acrimonious debate, remained untouched. In prewar days, when there was an abundance of magazines, the F.S.S. had been a discussion group with an interest in international fan activities. In the post war period, the F.S.S. had been a magazine market, divisible into buyers (passive fans) and sellers (those active enough to write overseas and get magazines). Either the club returned to its prewar days of discussion or it resumed aggressive action. Stone said he could see no reason why anything was necessary beyond a drive for recruits. Russell withdrew the amendment, and the motion was altered to read: "This meeting recommends to the F.S.S. that it consider winding up its affairs." After three quarters-of-an-hour fierce and disorderly debate, the gag was applied and the motion was carried, 6 in favour, 4 against. Veney said the matter had now become purely a club affair and there was nothing the meeting could do. He vacated the Chair.

Resuming the discussion, Macoboy said it was evident there was a greater amount of interest being taken in the club, although nothing concrete had been arrived at. Stone said that if new blood were enlisted the club could carry on as it had done in the past. Sointseff said he could not carry the combined load of the four executive positions much longer. Molesworth said fans had to act as a team or refrain from expecting one or two people to do all the work for them.

On June 22, Sointseff reported to the 159th meeting of the Society that the conference had failed to reach agreement on a revival of club activity, but it had recommended that the club should hand its Library over to a Trust to consist of seven trustees, who would look after and administer the Library for the benefit of Australian fandom. Macoboy moved, Sointseff seconded, that this recommendation be adopted. The motion was carried and a transfer document signed.

Some days afterwards the F.S.S. Library Trust was established with Larnach, Macoboy, Molesworth, Russell, Sointseff, Stone and Veney as Trustees. Russell became Chairman, Veney Secretary, and Sointseff Librarian. Some seventy books and 200 magazines were handed over.

Only one further meeting of the F.S.S. took place in 1950. This was #160, held on August 13, at which Molesworth was elected Director and Sointseff Secretary-Treasurer. Membership had fallen to four full members and ten associates, and the prospect of resuscitation seemed remote. Nevertheless it was decided to keep the machinery intact and carry on with a restricted programme, which would include meetings when possible, and an irregular news-sheet. Only one issue appeared, however. This was THE SYDNEY FUTURIAN, Vol. 2, #1, dated September, 1950, in a 4-page 8vo printed format.

But although the postwar organisational bubble had burst, there was no cessation of individual activity. In Perth, Roger N. Dard issued a one-shot 12 pp. photolithographed fanzine, STAR ROVER. In Sydney, Nick Sointseff had published a 12 pp. folded foolscap duplicated fanzine, WOOMERA.

In September, 1950, Vol Molesworth purchased a new Adana printing press, and registered the business name "Futurian Press", the object being to publish limited editions and select fantasy.

Very soon a group of fans began to gather at Molesworth's home every Saturday afternoon, to help in printing activities, to discuss science fiction generally, to use the Library, and to have tea *en masse* afterwards. Keenest supporters were Nick Sointseff and Roy Williams. The first printed book, S. L. Larnach's CHECKLIST OF

²⁷ *There had been earlier messages sent which had been ignored. Neither, indeed, was this recording acknowledged, though it was mentioned by people attending the meeting. (G.S.)*

²⁸ *So an elite group and an underclass had become established. It shouldn't have happened. (G.S.)*

²⁹ *A good point. The idea of the library was the most obvious such benefit, and an effective newsletter should have been another. (G.S.)*

AUSTRALIAN FANTASY³⁰, was released at a cocktail party on October 29, attended by thirteen fans, including A. Bertram Chandler.³¹

Meanwhile, the regular Thursday night meetings continued at the Sun Si Gai, but no further attempts were made to set up a formal organisation.

Early in 1951, Nick Solntseff decided to abandon the duplicated format of WOOMERA, and start afresh with a 20 pp. 8vo printed magazine. The result was by far the best fan publication in Australia. The printed format and neat layout gave an appearance of permanence and dignity to the well-balanced contents. The first issue appeared in February, the second in September, 1951. The only drawback was the necessary slow typesetting and handprinting.

During 1951, Futurian Press published two works of fantasy, BLINDED THEY FLY by Vol Molesworth, and ZERO EQUALS NOTHING by Graham B. Stone and Royce Williams, each well received by the Press.

In the first issue of WOOMERA, Stone announced the formation of a new national organisation to keep Australian fans in contact. This was the Australian Science Fiction Society, which was to play a major part in the coming renaissance and break all the previous membership records. "Its purpose is to bring together for their mutual benefit Australians interested in science fiction", Stone stated. "This is to be accomplished by locating and enrolling all fans who can be contacted, making them known to each other, and issuing monthly a news-magazine, keeping them up to date on science fiction here and overseas."

To begin with, the news-magazine took the form of a printed 8vo maglet, SCIENCE FICTION COURIER. Three issues of this appeared, in March, April and August. Thereafter Stone realised that printing was too slow for the rapid dissemination of information, and changed to a duplicated folded foolscap magazine, STOPGAP, of which issues appeared in October, November and December.

The response to A.S.F.S. was phenomenal. An indication of the eagerness of scattered Australian fans to achieve the sense of "belonging" is given in the following membership figures:

March, 195110
April25
August40
December55

and, to glance ahead of our chronological account, the 100 mark was passed in June, 1952.

From the beginning, Graham Stone was unashamedly a "dictator". He simply declared himself Secretary and went ahead. There were no meetings and no elections. But the system worked splendidly³². For the first time in years, Australian fans were united

in a community organisation, and they were regularly supplied with information, at a nominal charge of 2/6 a year.

The object of the A.S.F.S. was to cover all of Australia, not particularly bothering with Sydney, which, accordingly to Stone, "could or should handle its own special local problems."³³ And as the first half of 1951 drew to a close, there was mounting feeling in Sydney that these problems had to be solved. There was considerable private talk on a resumption of local activities, and a needle in the arm for the F.S.S. Library Trust. After thrashing out preliminary matters with Molesworth, William D. Veney stepped into the breach and called the Fourth Sydney Science Fiction Conference for July 7, 1951, "to bring together all the local active fans, past and present, giving articulate form to the general revival of interest."

The Conference was held in the small hall at G.U.O.O.F.



Haddon, Kevin Smith, Glick, Molesworth, Russell, Veney - 4th Conference

Building in Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Seventeen fans attended, including Jack Murtagh from New Zealand and George Dovaston from England. Veney occupied the Chair, and proceedings were recorded by Eric F. Russell. The following details were taken from a report, drawn up by Veney and Russell, but not published.

After a welcome address by the Chairman, the Conference was presented with reports from various organisations on their activities and future aims. Speaking on the F.S.S. Library Trust, Nick Solntseff said it had in stock 85 books and 200 magazines. Funds were low, and there was only seven borrowers.

Graham Stone, reporting on the A.S.F.S., said it had done what it set out to do, - that is to bring people together. The interest shown by people out of town was "overwhelming".

The Director of Futurian Press (Vol Molesworth) said that the Press had achieved something more than the publishing of a few books. Although created out of the need for dollars and the desire for self-expression, it had helped to keep the spirit of co-operation alive until such time as some sort of organisation on an official basis had been formed. The co-operation and good fellowship evidenced in the Saturday afternoon printing activities had been "one reason why he had kept his faith in fandom".

Reporting on the Futurian Society of Sydney, Molesworth said it still existed and had four members, but had not met for months. "The machinery of the Society had been kept intact."

Mr Solntseff reported that the Sydney University Futurian Society no longer existed because its registration had not been renewed with the University authorities.

Mr Macoboy reported that Australian representation at the 1950 American Convention had been effected by means of recordings.

Resolutions were then accepted from the floor. P. Glick moved, seconded by Kevin Smith, that Australia be represented at the

³⁰ Larnach, an active member of the Book Collectors' Society, introduced serious collecting to the group. His Checklist was the first attempt at an Australian bibliography and revealed that much more early Australian SF existed than had been known. (G.S.)

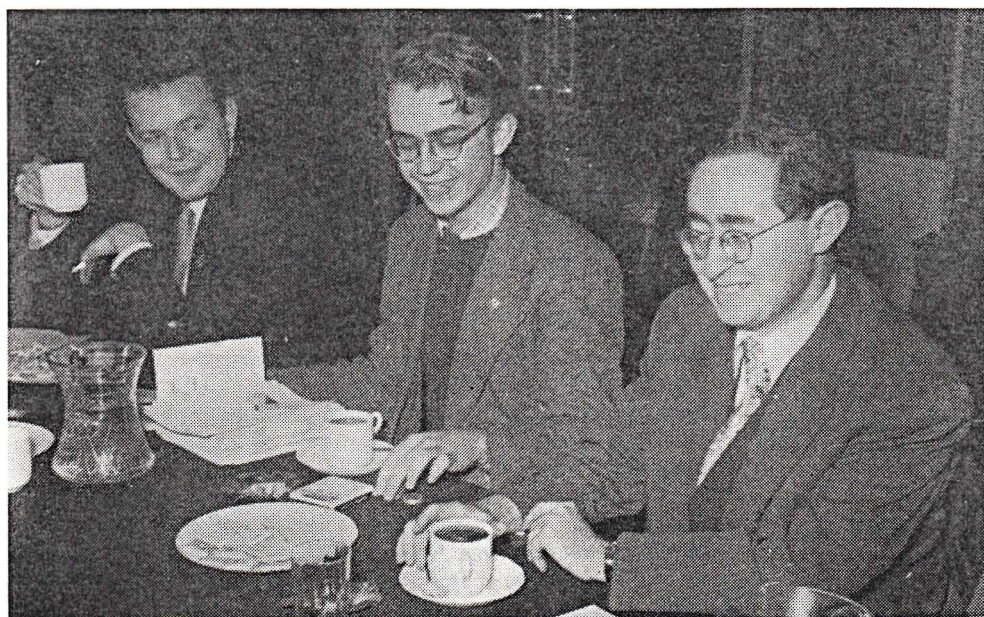
³¹ Chandler had visited Sydney from time to time since 1945 and made himself known to Macoboy and Russell before the group reformed. (G.S.)

³² Anyone who has served on a committee of an interest group will know that there are always members anxious to be elected to executive positions but not much use in them. (G.S.)

³³ STOPGAP, p. 15.

next American Convention. This was carried, and a committee of three - Veney, Smith and Stone - was appointed to this task.

The Conference was then thrown open for general discussion. Glick said that an opportunity had been missed to contact other fans when the film *DESTINATION MOON* was screened in Australian theatres. He suggested that the funds of the Futurian Society be used to contact fans by newspaper advertising. Molesworth inquired what would be done with newcomers contacted in this manner. Arthur Haddon asked whether the F.S.S. was interested in recruiting members and becoming an active organisation again. Molesworth said "this was a matter which could come from the Conference: it was for the Conference to take some action towards the club, - not turn to the F.S.S. and ask it for assistance." Solntseff said that if any person was willing to take an active part in the Society, so much the better, "but he did not think it was worthwhile if all the work rested on his own and Mr. Molesworth's shoulders." Considerable discussion followed on the question of reviving the F.S.S., Stone commenting that the best idea would be for an active local group to exist in the name of the F.S.S. in co-operation with the A.S.F.S. Glick argued that there was really no need for a Futurian Society. The A.S.F.S. did all the important work and the Library had been taken over. The only purpose of the Society would be to provide a meeting ground on a formal scale. But if meetings were held formally the same old trouble, - lack of interest, poor attendance, - would occur. In general, there was no longer any need for the Society, - that was why he suggested its funds be used on something constructive.



MacCoboy, Solntseff, Brunen - 4th Conference

The discussion was interrupted as the time for which the hall had been hired had expired. The fans transferred to the Sun Si Gai and resumed the Conference. Molesworth moved, seconded Solntseff, that Veney and Haddon be empowered to investigate ways and means of forming a club in Sydney. This was carried.

A motion by Stone, seconded by David Cohen, that a science fiction Convention be held in Sydney later in 1951 was also carried. A committee comprising MacCoboy, Russell, Stone and Veney was appointed to organise such a Convention. After a vote of thanks to the organising committee, the Conference closed.

Veney and Haddon, who had been given authority to determine how the new local club should be formed, decided that the best plan would not be to start an entirely new body, but to "invade" and invigorate the existing Futurian Society. Molesworth and Solntseff fell in readily with the plan, and three weeks later convened the 161st Meeting, to which all were invited. No less than eleven Sydney fans came along, and apologies were received from four others.

As soon as the minutes had been read, applications for membership were received from Lex Banning, Harry Brunen, David Cohen, Jock McKenna, Kevin Smith, Graham Stone and William Veney. All were accepted. "After going through a revised constitution

point by point, the members decided to drop associate membership and continue purely as a local club. It was felt that this was the best course now that Stone's A.S.F.S. was catering for fans outside Sydney, and the National Fantasy Fan Federation (of America), per medium of Westralian Roger N. Dard, was expanding into the Pacific area generally.³⁴ A new executive panel was elected for six months, as follows:

Director: Vol Molesworth
Vice-Director: William D. Veney
Secretary: Arthur Haddon
Treasurer: Nick Solntseff

Veney informed the meeting that the U.S. Representation Committee had decided to send a group photograph taken at the Conference, together with a letter, to the American Convention. the Society decided to finance this project, and in due course the material was forwarded by air.³⁵

With regard to the proposed Australian Convention, Veney said that mechanics were such that it would be hard to stage a Convention in 1951. Banning moved that the Society recommend to the organising committee that the Convention be held on March 22, 1952. This was seconded by Solntseff, and carried.

The Revival of the Futurian Society had caused a slight embarrassment to the F.S.S. Library Trust, - the ancestor, as it were, coming back to life and using its offspring's name. Accordingly the Trustees met on August 9 and decided to change the name to the Australian Fantasy Foundation.³⁶

The reference above to the N.F.F.F. spreading to the Pacific is confirmed by the membership list published in the October, 1951 issue of *THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN*, which included seven Australian and one New Zealand fan, - Lewis R. Bennett, Roger N. Dard, Vol Molesworth, Rex Meyer, John C. Park, Nick Solntseff, Graham Stone and Donald H. Tuck. The February-March '52 issue lists two more - Arthur Haddon and Kevin Smith.³⁷

Once re-established, the Futurian Society quickly went ahead. Meetings were held regularly throughout the year on the fourth Monday night of each month. The venue was the Board Room in the G.U.O.O.F. Building, where the formal business atmosphere provided a welcome change from the past experience of meeting in lounge rooms and restaurants. An added stimulus was the distribution of a booklet containing the Constitution and Rules, printed by the Secretary on his newly-acquired press.

At Meeting #162 (August 27) Cohen raised the question of publishing an official club magazine. Members felt, however, that publication of club activities was best left to individual fanzines such as *WOOMERA*, and *COURIER*, and on Glick's motion, seconded by Solntseff, this matter was shelved for three months. When the matter came up again at Meeting #165, the Society was so busy with the Convention plans that it was again adjourned to March, 1952. The idea was then abandoned.

At the August meeting the question of public relations was raised. It became evident that while some members favoured press publicity, as a means of contacting new fans, others feared it as a

³⁴ *FANTASY-TIMES*, #136, August, 1951, p.2.

³⁵ As usual, there was no reply. (G.S.)

³⁶ The Trust had been a dopey idea in the first place, the change of name was a worse one. (G.S.)

³⁷ But there was little if any benefit from this body. (G.S.)

vehicle of ridicule³⁸. A motion limiting the duties of the Public Relations Officer to publicising the Society through "recognised sf. and fantasy" channels was carried 7 - 3. Glick was elected to the post.

At Meeting #163 (September 24) Veney said that the idea of holding an Australian Convention had been that of Macoboy and Stone. He had asked Macoboy, Russell and Stone to start work, but so far, only Stone had done anything. He stated that Macoboy had refused to help and he had been unable to contact Russell. As things stood, he added, the Convention "looked shaky".

Clearly, the gauntlet had been thrown down to the re-established club. Would it take up the challenge, take over responsibility for the Convention, - an event of major national fan importance, - or let the project collapse? Glick moved, seconded Banning, that the Society should adopt the former course.

Speaking from the Chair, Molesworth said that before the Society embarked upon the course suggested, the members should realise it would mean a lot of work. Those who were not absolutely in favour of it should not support the motion. Members should consider the reputation of the Society in Overseas fandom, and under no circumstances should the Society be held up to ridicule for having been unable to make a success of the Convention. He then put the motion to the vote and it was carried unanimously. Stone said that to prevent responsibility being placed in the hands of a few members acting as a committee and the work being left entirely up to them collective responsibility should be adopted. The Society then drew up a temporary agenda for a one-day Convention, and appointed a committee comprising Veney (Chairman), Stone (Secretary), Sointseff (Treasurer), Smith (Controller of Exhibits), Banning (Films), Haddon (Auctioneer), Sointseff (Editor of Booklet), and Glick, Stone, Smith and Haddon (Publicity). The Society also decided to invite Eric F. Russell to attend meetings and co-operate. Russell declined the invitation.

The controversial question of publicity arose again at Meeting #164 (October 22) when Smith moved that the Society advertise in THRILLS, INC. This was a science adventure publication which in some quarters was hailed as "Australia's first prozine", in others condemned as juvenile. Smith said that by advertising in THRILLS, knowledge of the Society would reach a wide field³⁹ and people interested in group meetings would be contacted. Stone said that a careful screening process of persons who responded would be necessary. Smith then withdrew his motion and moved instead that the society should advertise in THRILLS "in such a way as to indicate the existence of science-fiction fans in Australia." This was seconded by McGuinness, and carried unanimously. Brunen was deputed to investigate the cost of such an advertisement. He reported to Meeting #165 (November 26) that he had met with little success: he had been quoted 20 pounds a page, but considered this had been intended as a discouragement. The Society decided to write to THRILLS, requesting their advertising rates. At the following meeting, the Secretary reported that he had despatched a letter, but received no reply. The Society also decided to contact British publishers of science fiction, whose magazines were distributed in Australia, concerning their advertising rates. This was a move which was to bear fruit in the following year.

At this meeting, the Director informed members that the Society was twelve years old. Veney moved that "we, the present members of the Society, recognise that our organisation has been in existence for a period of twelve years, and that during the recent world war the threads of our organisation have remained intact; and we resolve to support the ideals of its founders." This was seconded by Ken Martin and carried unanimously.

During November, leading West Australian fan Roger N. Dard visited Sydney, and quickly became popular with Thursday night gatherings, now being held at the Moccador Cafe in Market Street. Earlier, two visits had been paid to Sydney by another Perth fan, John C. Park.

In December, Haddon published the first issue of TELEPATH, a printed 12 pp 8vo fanzine. It was somewhat marred by faulty printing but indicated the general upswing in activity.

The last 1951 meeting of the Futurian Society (#166) was held on December 28. It was almost fully occupied with details concerning the forthcoming Australian Convention. Such matters as the hiring of a hall and a film projector, catering, publicity, and the dinner, were thrashed out. Hopes were high that the 1952 Convention would be an outstanding success. The Futurian Society had thrown itself into the task of organisation with vigour. Its membership had been increased to fifteen during the year by the admission of Ken Martin, Royce Williams and Ian Driscoll.

As Veney wrote in WOOLMERA, "Early this year we made quite a lot of plans and dreamt a lot of dreams. Many expressed doubts about our ability to carry out these plans and thought we were biting off more than we could chew. Yet, despite a few upsets and disappointments, the general pattern of our planning has been carried out exactly as we wanted."

(Continued next issue)

[Photos and additional footnotes (in *italics*) courtesy of Graham Stone]

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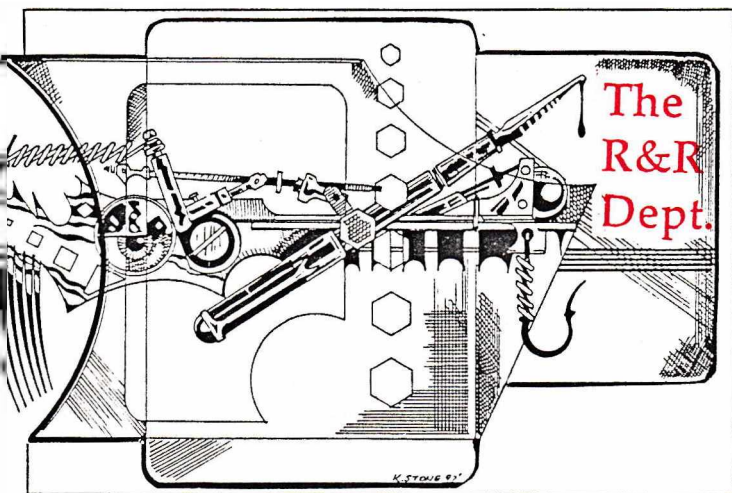
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³⁸ *Knowing what treatment groups in the USA had received. On the other hand, publicising the Convention was an obvious function for a newsletter. (G.S.)*

³⁹ Estimated at 8,000 in FANTASY TIMES #132, June, 1951.



GEORGE LASKOWSKI, Jr, 1306 Cherokee, Royal Oak, MI 48067-3385, USA.

I wanted to comment on your editorial about educational systems. Since I am a teacher in the private schools sector of United States education, I have been involved in some varying methods of teaching math. I have found that some of the ideas I have implemented have become, in some cases, the "in" thing to do. The idea of making math relevant has been around for a long time - that's what story problems were all about - but making such word problems realistic was always difficult. I tried to find more realistic types of situations to present to my students and use those in my classes. Believe me, they are not easy to find. (Maybe I'm not looking in the right places.) Cooperative learning is another big thing in US education, but I've been doing that for years. I allow kids to take tests together, and this has helped them learn more and succeed where some would otherwise have failed.

Private schools do have a measure of freedom in planning their curriculum, but they must conform to what public education does close enough so they can have accredited course work and the students can qualify for various colleges and universities when they graduate. I was pleased when our education system allowed for broadened bases of classes, which gave the students some choice in pursuing interests in various fields, so long as they got the "basics" down. Unfortunately, students and parents got the idea that the basics weren't that necessary because they were too hard for many kids, and thus the kids only wanted to take the easy course, and the parents started to demand that the basic courses be easier so their kids would "feel good" about them, or worse yet, get credit so they could graduate - forget about what they really learned. The "Back to Basics" movements were a welcome relief, but that became a very narrow focus of course work which enable kids to do well on standardized tests and gave them fundamentals. The backlash of this was that the kids didn't have much creativity, and encountering anything new, or what they had not been taught, or given problems they should be able to do with the tools they had, most kids became frustrated. They had not been taught to think, to adapt to new situations, and thus such education was termed a "failure". Still, administrators who retained some aspect of their teaching careers decided that revising the curriculum to incorporate the best of all methods are the ones on the forefront now. The good teachers know that nothing is [a] complete and total failure; learning from one's mistakes is the cornerstone to learning on all levels. The unfortunate thing is that not everyone learns this basic lesson.

Take the "New Math" for instance. Learning basic relations of numbers and the approach from a logical viewpoint was all well and good, but the system threw out rote learning, which was needed for that basic understanding - that is, you get the logical understanding later, but you need the rote learning on which to base the logic. Since the "New Math" was a failure, that was almost totally discarded, except for a few perceptive teachers and textbook writers, who came up with methods that incorporate both. One of the most fascinating courses I took was "Geometry from an Advanced Viewpoint". Having taught geometry for several years, I could appreciate more the underpinnings and the logical system. Trying that approach could have turned me off.

Another example is the method of teaching reading called "whole word recognition". The kids memorize words and groups of words - forget this idea of learning the sounds that the letters of the alphabet make and sounding out words. My sister teaches first grade, and she was amazed when some of her colleagues returned from a seminar all excited because they found out that there was a rule in language when a "g" or a "c" has a hard or soft sound. "How did you teach your kids the difference before you found this out?" she asked. They had the kids memorize the words. She has all her kids reading before they finish their year with her. She teaches them phonics, and they are better off for it.

I am concerned, however, with the gradual decay in preparation of the kids coming into the high school level in which I learn. Math has not always been the strong point for most kids, but I have seen larger numbers of kids who can't seem to grasp some of the basic fundamentals of integers. Some don't see the connection between "subtraction" and "addition of the opposite". On the other hand, there is a select few younger kids who come in so advanced that we don't have challenging enough courses for them. I fear that the idea of equal education for all is going to go the way of the kiwi bird, and a true separation of intelligence is going to happen. Kornbluth's THE MARCHING MORONS may yet come to pass.

I truly enjoyed Andrew Darlington's article on NEBULA SCIENCE FICTION. I have not seen copies of the magazine available on hucksters tables at recent conventions, but then I haven't been looking closely for copies. I will do so now, especially since I now know that William F. Temple was published in those pages. He wrote some really good SF, and is a very underrated talent.

Speaking of good SF, have you seen any copies of THE LATHE OF HEAVEN? It was produced and filmed by the Public Broadcasting Service here in the States, and I saw it when it was first broadcast about 13 years ago. I haven't seen it since, nor have I seen it available in various video catalogues. (27.1.94)

BRENT LILLIE, 10 Cherub St., Togun, QLD 4224.

A BOOK FOR BURNING by Bradley Row, well, I think I'll steer clear of Sheri S. Tepper's novel. I'd rather spend my time inventing a Dick-Alarm or something. A device that will snap a bloke out of a dead sleep at the slightest hint of cold steel and irate female.

Duncan Evans contribution was well written, and quite original in concept, although it didn't really reach out and grab me. The poetry... I thought SLIP-KNOT by J. C. Hartley was excellent. A poem called Mobius? The rest were okay. DISPATCH RIDER stood out as well.

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER made for entertaining reading, with it's failed SF magazine theme. Sort of skimmed through THE UNEXPLORED DIMENSION. I'm not particularly interested in that style of fiction, but I'll examine the article in more detail someday. I often drag out the old issues and discover a few gems in stuff I missed on the first, second or third time. In a past LOC I said that if a story doesn't impress me on the first reading, then that's it. I've changed that view now, after reviewing past issues. Some stories grow on you.

I'd like to comment on the question you asked at the conclusion of your editorial, Ron. Namely, what will replace organised religion in the future (although most religions reckon we haven't got much of a future left). You see, the majority of my friends are musicians. In my younger days, I used to tour up and down the Queensland coast in cover bands. Lately, I've bumped into a few old acquaintances and their eyes are filled with a strange, religious fervour, and they've tried to enlist me into their cause. They are very elusive, and pedal vague promises. They invite me to meetings, like born-again Christians do. My sister-in-law said that at one meeting at the revival centre, a bloke stood up and shouted out through his tears that he had been lost in the middle of nowhere one night, with no hope and no petrol, when the Lord filled up his tank. He had actually watched the needle on the gauge rise! Amazing. No, my friends seem not to be their old selves. They are kind of scary. Possessed.

They are the Amwayians. Yes, network marketers, brothers and sisters! My God, yesterday I even scored a couple of tickets to a Sting concert, at reduced prices, because the concert clashed with an Amway meeting! Praise the Lord!

One night I was on my way home from work when one of those darn pesky Amwaynian fellas drew up alongside me and

shouted out something about a faulty tail-light. He then proceeded to bail me up as I was waiting to cross the highway, and boy oh boy, did he give me an earful. When I demanded more specifics (I told him I was considering submitting a piece on network marketing to AUSTRALIAN PENTHOUSE), he was off like a rocket, squealing his tyres for fifty feet along the road. Not a bad effort, considering we were both on bicycles.

Very effective positioning of LOCS in #81, with the letters from Chris Masters, Mae Strelkov, and myself snapping at each other's heels. Isn't it great how we all look at things in a different way? I had to laugh at Chris Masters' comment at the end of his letter. He's a funny bastard, and brightens up the LOCS.

As usual, I enjoyed Bill Congreve's reviews. Turner's novel, THE DESTINY MAKERS, sounded as though it would be a good read.

Now, A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM. Jesus, this article seemed weird to me. It reminded me of the first time I read TM, which, at that stage, I thought stood for Total Mystification. Perhaps it was a feeling of surprise, that people could get so intense over science-fiction. I'd always just read it, without examining the whys and the wherefores. But here I am, writing letters, commenting, criticising, though I could never get as fantastical about the subject as Vol Molesworth and his colleagues. Full marks to them. They paved the way. And although their actions came across as almost childish at times, I suppose it's that infectious sense of wonder that appeals to us all. Because no matter how complicated SF gets, it's always somehow familiar, somehow reliable and comforting to be around - like old friends who haven't discovered network marketing. (2.2.94)

Little things tickled my fancy in TM 83. In the LoCs, George Ivanoff's statement that the poetry in TM 82 was "a mixed bag". Well, I personally didn't think it was all that awful, George. And perhaps the biggest "little" thing, the positioning of a single comma at the conclusion of Andrew Sullivan's outstanding contribution, STAR RISE OVER HADES.

Punctuation not only creates changes of meaning, as in: Miss Johnson asked Timmy, "Why are you crawling under the desk like a snake?" as opposed to: "Miss Johnson," asked Timmy. "Why are you crawling under the desk like a snake?" It can also change the entire mood of a story. Had Sullivan ended his story thus: "She heard a whoosh of escaping air and found herself outside with nothing to stop her from falling down", it would have served as an adequate finale; however, by way of astute placement of a comma (I desperately hope it's a comma, and not a wayward ink blot), he has transformed a merely adequate last sentence into a memorable one - "She heard a whoosh of escaping air and found herself, outside with nothing etc etc." Great. Loved the story. It had it's flaws, certainly, being slightly obese about the middle, but that wicked ending make it uplifting downbeat, if there is such a thing. And if there isn't, there is now, thanks to Andrew Sullivan.

I liked SENTINELS, despite the hackneyed ending. Overall, a claustrophobic issue, Ron, what with all the caves and hollow interiors of giant spaceships. Scarf has a nice feel for horror, or maybe I was just carried along by the general tone of the issue. SENTINELS was genuinely eerie, up until the last couple of paragraphs, anyway.

More and more, I'm enjoying the poetic offerings. In TM 83 I especially liked POETS ARE QUITE MAD YOU KNOW.

The history of Australian fandom's getting a bit tedious, I'm afraid. Not exactly rivetting stuff, is it? But I guess it would appeal to some.

Wonderful cover art. The issue was sitting on the dinner table and my kids were drawn to it like bees to a flower. And that was even before they saw the naked lady. True praise for Kurt Stone! The comic strip on the back page was refreshingly different as well.

I'd like to thank Terry Broome for taking the time and effort to pen a lengthy critique on THE JAM JAR in his LoC. I assure you, Terry, not all my stories have been, or will be, written in a similar vein. I just had a ball writing JAM JAR, and many people obviously enjoyed the final result. I don't dispute your criticisms for a moment (apart from the one about 'soul' - does anyone really possess the exact formula for achieving such an obscure quality in their work?), but I'd advise you to lighten up, just [a] little. After all, some of life's greatest journeys are taken in vehicles that are mechanically unsound.

In summing up, I'd have to say there was something in TM 83 for everyone. (24.2.94)

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, PO Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510-5309, USA.

... I need to write a note to Bradley Row. HEY! ROW! LIGHTEN UP! It is only a work of fiction, OK? I have not read Tepper's THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY, but I certainly will if the library stocks it, if only to confirm my feelings that I know what book to compare it to.

And it is not by any means MAIN KAMPF by Hitler. Really now, all this throwing around of Hitler's name and words like "feminist". As a work of fiction based on the concept of "what if" I see no need to draw in straw dummies labelled "feminism" to be kicked at.

The book that should have been mentioned is Plato's REPUBLIC. It has been quite a few years since I read Plato, but my memory is that his proposed Republic is very much like Tepper's, run by the men of course. In other words, Tepper is standing Plato's ideas on their head with her own send-up for the concept of the ideal City-State. And yes, indeed, Plato had his ruling elite using lies to stay in power and promote their program.

So if the book does appear in the local library, I intend to take out her book and Plato's book just to confirm if my memory is correct.

I don't seem to understand what you mean in your editorial about organised religion being in decline. Is it? Seems to be in good shape as far as the USA goes. Islam still has a heavy grip in many countries. But if Christianity were to really go into a decline, I think a mixture of New Age ideas would take up the slack. The main thing about religion is that it overcomes the fear of death. Science cannot do that. So religion in some form will probably be a major part of society, with the non-believers in souls always a minority.

... the earthquake. Well, I came through OK. The epicenter was far enough away that no real damage occurred to the house. We had about 10 seconds of sharp P-waves and 45 seconds of S-waves, but not too intense. (17.2.94)

ANDY DARLINGTON, 44 Spa Croft Rd, Teall St, Ossett, W. Yorkshire WF5 8HE, England

Our tale begins on [the] dark and gloomy planet Ossett, a pit of pain where the black sun of dawn breaks like a rotten egg. I'm waking from a dream of being inside THE MENTOR #82, and what a trip that was! The Brent Lillie story (JAMES) was a beautifully constructed piece of magical (sur)realism with effective fades warping in and out of some exquisitely absurd inner sequences. The best of these - the kitten breakfast, and the brain-penetrating cricket-ball build from deceptive normalcy into grotesquely listed weirdness.

Not so sure about Duncan Evans (HUNDRED GATES HOLT), it seems like a long and occasionally catchy crawl through to the punchline, and once there - a smart oddness admittedly, but I'm not sure if that smartness really justifies the build.

John Francis Haines (RACE AGAINST TIME) says more in its seven evocative and stunningly hallucinogenic lines. After that I skip a dream or two, and like John Haines poem-locked protagonist, do some time-tripping by shifting gear into ASTOUNDING STORIES (Deb 1938) by way of a compare and contrast exercise. A Mr. John D. Clark of 3809 Spruce St, Philadelphia boasts a Ph.D. and writes in to their "R&R DEPT" on the topic of future evolution. "It is probable that Men will be perceptively different from the present species in half a million years" he says, offering the kind of futures that were considered appropriate for the 1930's - "Improved dexterity with the fingers, and perhaps longer and more slender fingers" for button-punching. Sensory extensions" of the visual range into the infra-red and ultra-violet", some telepathic abilities so that "he will be able to know the universe around him without the intervention of his other senses". A nicely visionary idea.

SF seldom bothers itself with such matters these days, narrowing its scale to specifics and refocussing its concerns often healthily and vigorously. But Mr Clark's question remains true. In the previous decade - with the eco-scares, it would probably have conjured up skin pigmentation and thickening alterations to provide protection from un-ozone-layered sunlight, vast organic nasal filters for removing atmospheric pollution, hooded retinal membranes and

other such 1980's preoccupations. But what now? I'd guess at genetic manipulation assuming control of evolution itself, editing out the random elements by creating a diversity of custom-built sub-races adapted to a range of environments of and as required. Why Terraform Mars or Venus (like Kim Stanley Robinson's ongoing trilogy) when it's far easier to adapt people to those worlds as they are. Mr Clark (Ph.D) invites participation. I'm now chasing up the March 1938 edition to check on the responses he received... (19.2.94)

ROBERT FREW, 1 Funda Pl, Brookvale, NSW 2100.

On a good note, the fiction in #82 was excellent, JAMES, I think, being the best of the two. It had a colourful mix of nastiness with a few surprises all wrapped in an air of surrealism.

In fact, both stories were a little bizarre. Nanny Bane in Evan's HUNDRED GATES HOLT was almost as wicked as the Tall Man in the movie PHANTASM.

Great cover on TM #83. It was some of the things inside the cover that worried me, however. It seems A NEW ORDER has similarities to an old Brian Aldiss tale. I hope someone can let me know where to find it, so I can read his version of my story. As a uni graduate I know how serious accusations of plagiarism are - I hope TM readers can say the same thing.

For those of you who liked my story - thanks. For those of you pointing fingers, I hope Ron is quick to print another of my stories he has on file to show that I have an imagination of my own, and I don't steal ideas from others. (23.2.94)

TONIA WALDEN, PO Box 328, Carina, QLD 4152.

Your editorial [in TM 82] on religion was interesting. Mythology is an interest of mine, comparative religion/mythology especially so. I tend to agree that religion has seemed to be an integral part of the structuring of societies (for better or worse) and what it will evolve into who knows - a lot of people seem to have a need for a faith in something and it gives a lot of power to people who lead others in these religions - who knows what religion might evolve into - the idolisation of the media? (just kidding - sort of).

JAMES was an interesting story - hard to follow at the beginning, being one of those stories that doesn't really make sense until the ending is revealed so you have to go back and read it again to understand it properly - it had an interesting flow of imagery that kept me reading.

The A BOOK FOR BURNING review - disappointing as I have read some of Sheri Tepper's books and enjoyed them - and they seemed fair to both sexes. I haven't however read this book, but if it is indeed anti-male (if there is a similar term to misogynist for this?) it sounds pretty sad. However it is interesting that a book that is supposedly "feminist" diatribe seems to have managed to get up peoples noses so successfully - even if you don't agree with extremist ideas at least they force you to think about the issues (this couldn't have been her intention could it?) - one of the reasons that different ideas and books should never be burnt.

I've read a number of Duncan Evans fantasy stories before and enjoyed them - HUNDRED GATES HOLT was no exception. Weird. Also enjoyed the article about Michael Moorcock and the HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM. (18.2.94)

I'd seen Kurt Stone's illustration [in TM 83] before when it was on the cover of an issue of EOD - the colour version looked good. The rest of the art in the issue was good too.

STAR RISE OVER HADES though starting well completely lost me when the main character started having a moral dilemma. After having used humans (humanoids?) as cattle for what was implied many years, how could they not have noticed the similarities - seemed too contrived and lost the suspension of belief that is necessary for fantasy/SF.

I liked Bill Congreve's column - I often wonder whether people sneak in with pseudonyms too - it is interesting to find out when women or men have written under the reverse gender pseudonyms, (as often used to happen with women authors - doesn't happen all that often now) and see if it changes or explains your perception of the book. The SILENCE OF THE LAMBS review sounded particularly stupid - it certainly isn't how I read the book, which I thought had a strong interesting female central character.

WAVECAVE was an unusual idea for a fantasy story -

surfing mythology no less. Quite enjoyable with the only disappointment being the ending seemed a bit ambiguous. (1.4.94)

ROD MARSDEN, 21 Cusack St, Merrylands, NSW 2160.

This issue I can read the poetry without nodding off. You must have taken my criticisms to heart and either dragged in some *real* poets or given your resident ones a pep talk and a rub down before letting them loose on their virgin sheets of typing paper. The only let down was Julie Vaux's POETS ARE QUITE MAD, YOU KNOW. It was mundane crap amongst the black and rather dangerous flowers on offer. Besides, her poem AFTER THE MOVIE was quite good. You should have just gone with that one.

SONG FROM 2 MILLION B.P. (B.C. maybe) [more likely Before Present. - Ron.] was rhythmic but had a rough and readiness about it that reminds one of sea shantys. "Life's a weed nettled with fear, defying the winds of fortune, defying time to the year, when the winds become trade and the skies do clear". That sort of thing.

NEW WORLD ORDER II by J. C. Hartley was good value and so was PLANET NEMESIS by Cecelia Drew. THE LISA SAGA by Trent Jamieson reminds me, for some reason, of E. A. Poe's short work SHIP IN A BOTTLE. Trent did well in capturing a sense of a time long past when Buccaneers sailed the seas and the Western Australia coast was a haven for them. Raise the Jolly Roger some more Trent. Let these land-lubber S/F folk taste of the cutlass and we'll down a tankard of rum together!! We won't mention blackbirding for coin along the African coast or wenching in the Caribbean. It might offend someone.

Bill Congreve's review of SHRIEKS: A HORROR ANTHOLOGY was pretty much to the point. I think both Bill and Alison Lyssa read too much into SILENCE OF THE LAMBS. Why can't it simply be a novel about 2 sociopaths and the people who hunt them down? Is the author of SILENCE OF THE LAMBS really trying to attack either female or male sexuality or is he just trying to entertain and, in some ways educate, with what he knows about sociopathic behaviour from his days as a journalist doing the police rounds, etc? Don't get silly on us now, Bill! Maybe you were wise not to mention the poetry in SHRIEKS. I'll be daring and say it was awful.

In the letters pages this issue you had one Mike Hailstone from Victoria who could quite easily understand the connection between Steve Carter's FERAL KILLERS and the savagery we find in nature. He's right in saying the female eating the male during or after sex is nothing new in the insect world.

Yvonne Rousseau from South Australia comes across as a real twit. If the letter she wrote in THE MENTOR 83 is the last then good luck to her elsewhere. Steve Carter's THE INITIATE was obviously too much for her. Satan only knows what might happen to her palpitating heart if she ever came across Mr. Carter's FEMOSAUR WORLD.

It seems that more than just yours truly have given the nod of approval to Mr. Row's review of THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY. How about that? (25.2.94)

LYN ELVEY, 15 Shade Place, Lugarno, NSW 2210.

Just a note to let you know that the Southern Science Fiction and Fantasy Group is still going strong and that we have organised our agenda for the year. I thought that your readers might like to hear our plans and if anyone is interested in attending a meeting they can give me a ring on (02) 534-3595 for more details (all meetings are at the above address).

21/5/94 - Discussion on Computers in Science Fiction.

17/6/94 - Author review - author yet to be selected.

16/7/94 - Soup and Video afternoon.

20/8/94 - Discussion on books/movies about the End of the World or almost the end of the world.

17/9/95 - Continuing on last meeting Post Holocaust stories and the next stage of evolution.

15/10/95 - Author review - author yet to be selected.

12/11/94 - Magic - one for the fantasy fans.

12/12/94 - Christmas Party.

(-2.95)

CHRIS A. MASTERS, PO Box 7545, St. Kilda Rd., Melbourne, VIC 3004.

First of all, I just love that Kurt Stone cover. I know I've seen

that illo somewhere before though. Oh yeah, I used an uncoloured version of said illo for the cover of EOD #8. Looks great in colour too.

[Actually, it's about 1,000% better in colour - Ron.]

I'm one of these people, that when in the right mood, actually enjoys having my door pounded upon by a Jehova's Witness, or one of those Mormons with the funny underwear (ask them about it sometime, and while you're at it mention "blood atonement" too). These loonies can be a lot of fun. Several weeks back I answered the doorbell to find a couple of JH's on the other end ready to tell me all about the upcoming Armageddon (and their version has nothing to do with Bill Congreve's anthology either!). Once the subject of God & Jesus was started, I told them that I, too, was a missionary from the Church of the Pastor Buck Naked, and that my job was to save people from Jesus. Should've seen their quick exit when I asked them if they'd care to take a donation as we're raising money in order to send missionaries to Northern Ireland to help them forget about Jesus.

But Jesus loves me anyway, regardless of whether I believe in him. Yeah, right. But will he swallow?

Mmmmm... reading all those letters in THE MENTOR 83, I seem to have offended a few of you sheeple. In fact I make it a point to offend at least one member of the sheeple family daily, and thanks to you Buck and Julie, you helped to fulfil my offence quota for February 25, 1994.

Now to answer some of your criticisms.

Buck Coulson: Yo, Buck! How's things over there in the Land of Chucks? I hope you haven't shot yourself in the foot with that mean ol' .44 you were bragging about. Keeping it in primo condition? My chainsaw's still finely tuned (I'm seriously considering adding a turbocharger!), and boy, is it one dangerous motherfucker! I mean, well, since we last exchanged comment in the R&R DEPT I've managed to decapitate myself... twice! Anyway, seeing you asked, I'm 33 going on 447, physically that is. Mentally, who knows? Does a number small enough exist? They had to use a micrometer to measure my IQ! You do complement me by placing my mental age in my early teens. Most people rate me about 11 or 12 - but I am told that if I work real hard, I mean *real* hard, that I may reach 13 by the beginning of next millennium. And to think that I was a real serious-minded teenager. Well, now that you have all this useless information regarding myself, you can holster that ol' .44, sit yourself down on that rocking chair you keep on the porch, an' have yourself a little snooze, okay.

Now onto Julie Vaux: So you object to my use of the words "fuck", and "shit" do you? Words that you're even too prudish to write down. Well, fuck shit fuck fuck! I'm really sorry to have offended you... NOT! I'll express myself any way I bloody well please. My whole point re freedom of expression and censorship is based on my (and everybody else's right to say and write what I like and in any way I like, even if sheeple like yourself do find it offensive. I don't need your fucking approval.

In fact you sound just like one of those self-righteous blue-haired brigade, who think themselves so morally superior to the rest of us poor wretches, that we should leave it up to the likes of you to decide (and dictate) how we should behave and think.

Exploit the small press: fucking A I'll exploit it. And if my rants manage to offend a few uptight petty minds like yours so much the better. May you be locked in a room and having nothing to do but watch endless repeats of RE-ANIMATOR and BLOODSUCKING FREAKS!

[Hmmm. Since the time I spent three years on the Sydney Wharfs I've found the excessive use of expletives two things: boring, and an indication of the grasp of language of the individual spouting them. Throughout 30 years of working in this area I can't say I've found anything to change my opinion. In that time even school kids have been allowed to change their language patterns and lack of respect of authority. Another thing is has done - at least verbally, is to loose much of its impact. The print media is following, but is still behind. Some newspapers, including THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, still put in dashes for certain words - witness the latest furore over the MACQUARIE THESAURUS and the reactions of the Roman Catholic Church to such euphemisms as "dry as a nun's ***". On the other hand, some national magazines, such as THE BULLETIN, do put in the full words - Ron.]

"Who had the dirtier mind? - some sexist pig of a heavy

metal fan or the censor trying to do damage control?" you ask. Just the way you have chosen to word this supposition say a lot for your own lack of understanding or tolerance for anyone who holds different views or value systems other than your own. Using the same mentality I could just as easily brand you as just another non-thinking, slogan-sprouting, hairy-armed, foaming-at-the-mouth feminist, which of course you aren't. As to your summation of the heavy metal fan (it was a summation wasn't it?): being part of fandom yourself, you should know better than to make such generalised, simplistic and judgemental assumptions (assumption meaning - "unwarranted claim; the taking of anything for granted as the basis of argument or action" - look it up) on a sub-culture you obviously have very little knowledge of. In fact just like SF fandom, you'll find all types amongst the heavy metal fans... including feminists!

Your arguments are, bluntly speaking, stupid, simplistic, and based purely on assumption (there's that word again) and just do not stand up to any sort of logical scrutiny. In the end all I can do is laugh at you. You're obviously an idiot with no idea about the world about you. You'd probably be a lot happier living in Orwell's 1984.

Frankly, I'm amazed just how thin-skinned and easily offended some of you MENTOR readers are. You haven't seen offensive, if you think I'm offensive. I know (and know of) people who, by comparison (in the offensiveness department), make me look like one of the characters portrayed by the late Michael Landon. (28.2.94)

STEVE SNEYD, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, W. Yorkshire HD5 8PB, England.

#82 yet again an issue that succeeded in completely distracting me from things I should have been doing...

A future religion - cd go a lot of ways. Most frightening is idea of some convergence between the "blind faith in the market" aspects of capitalism currently rampant, and the worst excesses of the Xian, Islamic etc "fundies", with technology bound in, putting the one true "Faith" on the inescapable Internet as it were. Syncretist religions that incorporate those media idols already turning myth, as Cao Dai did in 'Nam - Elvis is already near deified, to many. Joke religions that develop inadvertently real followers, as the "Bobist" Church of the Subgenius has done. Religions where only an inner core has any idea what is really worshipped, and underlings wait patiently for crumbs to be dropped (the Druse religion has apparently operated like this for centuries, ditto the Yesidees, ostensibly propitiating some peacock Satan but in all probability, at the core, believing something quite different, though a new such "Mystery wrapped in Enigma Too Important For You To Know" blind faith would need to be able to recruit, where the Druse and Yesidees didn't, since those faiths had as a side or maybe core function the keeping intact of a conquered ethnic group). I imagine a myriad other directions are possible - humanity down the millennia has demonstrated an amazing ability to create faiths to suit any new social/economic situation. (As a tiny footnote to this, I was obviously unclear in a previous loc - re Buck Coulson's remark, I quite agree atheism is unscientific - it depends on proving an unprovable negative, unlike agnosticism, and also on definitions of the undefinable - what I was meaning is that many scientists appear to be in a state of shock because phenomena which are hard to compatibilise with the atheism they took "on faith" as appropriate to science seem to be leaking in via sub-atomic physics etc.)

The article on early Oz fandom is fascinating (I've noted mention of verse usage in ULTRA for "the files") - THEN, the Rob Hansen history of UK fandom, is now up to #4, the '70's, which seems to be arousing a lot of controversy as too dryly historical. To me, his approach (and Molesworth's) of putting on the record what "actually happened", as near as contemporary data courses make possible, is the essential first step. Then all the interpreters and "colour copy" merchants and picturesque anecdote retailers can move in, without so muddying the water as to make it impossible to even have any real fact structure.

Bradley Row's A BOOK FOR BURNING review article is interesting for the way it notes a very basic illogically in the "metastructure" of a great area of feminism, namely that it ignores the track record of female violence and oppression where women are "in power". Perhaps a lot of heat cd be taken out of the debate if there was a recognition that, given the conditions, both male and female in our species are dangerous animals, and that it is social structures that

have tended to give men more opportunity to reveal that aspect of their (generalisation) nature. The thesis of the book (as described - I've not read it) also seems to be totally flawed in another way, that given the artificial insemination capability of the women in the society described, they could have got rid of all males in one generation quite easily, rather than needing such Machiavellian ploys - use sperm banks, and then abort all males, since, as described, sex was no more necessary to them for procreation than it is nowadays at our technology level.

Nice to see the poetry back - particularly liked RACE AGAINST TIME for its cool restraint and the wit of the caches of clothes, and J. C. Hartley's SLIP-KNOT, working effectively with one of the most powerful core images of the psyche, not just in time-travel SF but universally... I do wonder, though, witty as the throw away last line is, whether it isn't also somewhat undermining of the poem's overall impact?

Andrew Darlington yet again brings into focus, with hard data, one of those areas where a vague general knowledge existed. "Oh, yeah, Moorcock, incredibly prolific teenager, but what the hell did he actually *do* then, aside from editing Burroughs mags? Well, now we know... though one tiny gap does remain I'd love to have the answer to, was it Moorcock who wrote, for Sexton Blake, THE FACE STEALER OF HUDDERSFIELD? One of the great titles, and near-SF (a crazed plastic surgeon, I understand, tho never seen the story), wd be great to think the great MM honoured this town with a mention somewhere along the line!

(Just casting back on the HISTORY OF OZ SF, I love the Levy comment footnoted: "other misstatements which are not actually misstatements but which are nevertheless really very small misstatements" - a much more elegant statement of the old one abt "I didn't do it, I wasn't there" etc (or "yes, but it's only a very small baby") should be titled LEVY'S LAW herewith.)

Re the horror censorship hassle, the two small press horror mags here, THE DARK SIDE and SHAHAIN, have had media pressure recently... apparently cops doing raids for "video nasties" used addresses culled from the two mags' small ads, the "meejah" then put 2 and 2 and made 5 and accused the mags of, by implication, association with Satanic child abuse, child murder etc etc.

Thanks to Brent Lillie, J. C. Hartley (and think someone else, but can't find again) for kind words re FROM HUDDERSFIELD TO THE STARS. Quite apart from what "proto-SF" they wrote, Dearden in particular of the poets I wrote about has elements of a real life fictional character (ie, though in one aspect a respectable school headmaster, he also went on carouses with Branwell Bronte - he was the guy responsible for stories that Branwell was the real author of WUTHERING HEIGHTS; he was also a wannabe vicar - his family went broke and he had to go into teaching instead - and the local archives have some corresp to him which reveals an admirable chutzpah; for eg, the vicar who edited a "small mag" of the time turned down one of Dearden's poems because of (very mild by 20th C standards!) section extolling the naked charms of a mill girl - when the poem appeared elsewhere in print, the "sales blurb" included quotes from the vicar's letter making him appear to praise the poem highly!) - thanks, Brent, you have given me an idea for a story, of Dearden himself becoming involved with a "real" "Star-Seer" world - tough whether I'll ever get down to it...

The various locs about education tempt me to start rambling on, as am still trying to weed worms of "edubabble" from the programmes of the brain, after doing the Cert Ed last year, but this loc getting overlong, so will firmly resist... no, I can't... not entirely - re Buck's comment re technology lag in teaching... the saddest, sickest thing about much of what is going on is the scam that kids are being taught skills for jobs which not only will no longer exist in the West by the time they graduate, many, in this country, no longer exist now: ie instead of being taught how to find things out, they're taught how to do obsolescent hoop-tricks. And as an evidence of the instrumentalist nature of much current serve-the-government-zeitgeist education, a terrifying definition we were given - "education is a measurable change of behaviour" - talk abt Turing's Test in reverse!

The question of the *real* Robin Hood (Bill Donahue's loc) opens a mega can of wriggly earthdwellers, so I definitely *will* resist that at this state. If he or anyone else is interested, though, I cd do 'em a list - by now a long one - of books exploring the "historical

possibles" in depth. And just about all agree RH's main HQ was Barnsdale Forest in Yorkshire, not Sherwood! (8.3.94)

...brief response to the fic in #82.

HUNDRED GATES HOLT is entertaining - a sort of punk horror Cannery Row.

JAMES is "something else" - a gem of writing. The smooth seques/morphs along the time line, the almost Dickian "certainty of uncertainty", haul the reader inescapably along. I would personally have preferred omission of the last 3 pars, and ending at "hesitation" - the tidying off closes doors of reader possibility for speculation. I'd've preferred left open - but otherwise a masterly miniature.

Can't find it again, but there was a mention in #81 or #82 of fan on showings of CLOCKWORK ORANGE. I was sure that this was director's decision, not any "outside force", and tucked recently onto a student mag article which confirms this and describes present situation, which might be of interest.

Is Norstrilia Press still in existence? I came across a mention somewhere that, back in '88, they still had copies of their publication of Zelazny's poems, WHEN PUSSYWILLOWS LAST IN THE CATYARD BLOOMED, and would like to enquire if it's still possible to get, but haven't been able to locate an address that is recent at all. (20.3.94)

[Bruce Gillespie was running that outfit. His address is GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, VIC 3001. - Ron.]

SEAN WILLIAMS, PO Box 605, Cowandilla, SA 5033.

What is a loc For?

I may be being slightly sensitive here, but I detected a hint of rebuke in Harry Warner's comment: "Searches for definitions of science fiction like the one by Sean Williams will never succeed..."

I wrote the "What is SF For?" first as an essay for an English subject at Uni and secondly as [an] article for TM, intending neither time to finish with a definition of sf (although along the way I do explore the *exploration*). My aim was to illustrate the futility in doing just that (hence the subtitle: "A Beginners Guide to the Search for ... etc"). One of the conclusions I reached was the very same one that Harry himself put forward in his loc: that SF is composed of so many splinter genres that any umbrella definition large enough to cover all the splinters will be so diffuse as to be useless (like the one I proposed, which is almost illegible - and deliberately so).

So, Harry, seeing we agree in principle on every point you raised in your loc of my article, why pick a fight?

Organised religion

Many, many people have taken up their crosses to rage for and against this particular issue. I'm afraid I can't see the problem. If everyone simply agreed to differ, life would be so much easier. I mean, why should one person's world-view be any more "correct" than any other's - and don't bother trying to rationalise it (you/we atheists in particular). Beliefs are intrinsically non-rational. An open mind is a full mind, I think, or at least an interesting one. Someone with a different belief to mine offers a chance to learn, not a potential convert (or, heaven-forbid, a scapegoat).

That having been said, however, I will confess to a certain amount of Christian bashing. But not on the basis of their beliefs. The only time they, or any other demographic, deserve abuse is when they try to convert or vilify me.

In essence, I agree with David Tansey on this issue, especially his closing sentence. Life truly is wonderful, even when it's shitty, and we *will* all die at the end of it. Who could argue with that?

Writers of the Future

The organised religion jihad seques quite naturally into the WotF and my trip to the States. Thanks, Trent, for asking. To sum it up, my week in LA last October may well prove to be one of the most important weeks in my life. Three things about it in detail:

Firstly, Scientology is irrelevant to the WotF Contest. This is something that concerned me before I left, I must admit. And sure, there is a certain amount of Hubbard-reverence present - but, hey, that's fair enough. The guy, like him or loathe him, was certainly quite remarkable. Only a closed-minded idiot would write off the whole thing for its tenuous connections with the Church of Scientology. I was there for five days, and have been in regular contact with New Era Publications ever since, and I've never once been hassled to join. The only time it's mentioned is when I bring it up. So phooey to you,

all you sceptics. Never ever be so stupid as to look a gift horse in the mouth.

(If you are an amateur writer and you haven't entered, do it now. Now! If you lose, what difference does it make? And if you win...).

Secondly, the trip itself was mind-blowing. How else can I describe it? I went to LA, somewhere I thought I'd never see; met Jack Williamson, Jerry Pournelle, Algis Budrys, Charlie Brown from LOCUS and Dave Wolverton, plus sixteen other up-and-coming SF writers; learned things in the workshop I would otherwise have had to hammer out the hard way; had my little story published in one of the world's largest SF anthologies. And they paid me for it!

But quite apart from the kudos, the celebs and the money, the win has given me something far more valuable: a sense of confidence and a feeling of getting somewhere. Not very far, but still somewhere. And that helps.

Thirdly, one of the other winners, Pete Manison (keep an eye out for him, folks) brought his sister to the awards ceremony. To cut a long story short, she's just gone back to Texas after a month here in Adelaide, and plans to return later this year (money permitting) this time to stay for good. So, in that sense, I think of WoIF not as the time I went to the States and had a really cool trip, but as the first time I met my future partner.

RED DWARF

I've left this until last for the simple reason that I hate to admit that I'm wrong. And I am. Terribly, terribly wrong. Wrong to put down anything that another person enjoys on the grounds that I don't. Wrong for assuming that my tastes and opinions should be some sort of solipsistic law pervade all the Universe. And especially wrong because, tragically, I am forced to admit that RED DWARF is, in fact, a bloody good show.

Sigh.

The reason for this sudden conversion? Simple: I watched season six. Then season four, five and three in two days straight. Then I watched some of season six again, just to make certain I hadn't made a mistake.

Nope. I loved it. Unashamedly. Alas. Now I have to eat humble pie and explain why I made those outrageous (and dare I say "heretical?") comments in my last loc.

Well, my fundamental mistake was to base my opinion on the few episodes I'd seen, which consisted of three episodes from seasons one and two, and one from season three. Now, I didn't know they were old, unrepresentative episodes, and that's my only defence. One episode in particular - "Backwards" - led me to the belief that the science was sloppy and the laughs were cheap (which they were in that episode). Only after seeing later seasons have I been forced to the conclusion that, although the science is still fairly slap-dash and never to be taken seriously, it does have its interesting moments and is, overall, pretty damn funny.

So, to Joe Fisher and Pamela Boal, and Shane Dix (without whom this change of heart would not have been possible), my sincerest apologies. And to anybody else who is still of my previous opinion, you can all smeg off.

The rest of the issue:

A big Hi to Mae. Surely one of the most memorable loccers to TM. Up there with the best: Peter Brodie, Chris Masters, David Tansey, and a handful of others. More power to you!

Loved Brent Lillie's WAVECAVE, although its symmetry seemed a bit wonky at times. Also loved Andrew Darlington's I REMEMBER... MERCURY."

Pauline Scarf's SENTINELS smacked of the old Ancient Astronaut debate, right from the word go. So the ending wasn't the surprise she perhaps imagined it to be. Shame.

And I loved the colour cover.

I notice that Clarke's Law appeared again:

Firstly, it goes: "The products of a sufficiently advanced technology would be undistinguished from magic to people from a less sophisticated culture."

Secondly, Agatha Christie, in her story THE HOUND OF DEATH, wrote: "The things we call supernatural are not necessarily supernatural at all. An electric flashlight would be supernatural to a savage. The supernatural is only the natural of which the laws are not yet understood."

As dear old Aggie wrote this in 1933, before Clarke, it could be argued that the Clarke's "Law" should properly be called the "Christie-Clarke Law" instead.

However, it's interesting to note that the initials of both writers are the same....

In closing, let me just mention my favourite typo for a long, long time. This one must surely be deliberate, at least on an unconscious level:

"The poetry was a mixed bad."

(8.3.94)

[Actually, I had noted and corrected that error, but the blasted computer didn't save the correction. - Ron.]

TRENT JAMIESON, 109 High St, Lismore Heights, NSW 2480.

I am writing this Loc feeling particularly sorry for my self. Unemployed, pretty much unpublished and with a bad dose of the flu I can't say that I'm feeling all that jolly. Still, TM 83 has managed to cheer me a little and, on the second reading, bring to my flu withered, drool covered lips the occasional smile.

I enjoyed Andrew Sullivan's STAR RISE OVER HADES. The grim ending was expected yet the work was compelling. Sympathy, for both the boy and the girl, was sustained. Society shapes us, makes monsters of innocents and rationalises the monstrous. You can't help but feel sorry for all concerned in this tale. Good work.

Brent Lillie's tale, a mixture of the dreamtime and the perfect wave was fun, and well written to boot. I like his stuff. Filth.

Pauline Scarf's SENTINELS didn't do that much for me, perhaps it was the brevity of the piece. Too much crammed into what was basically a vignette. There were, however, bits I liked, sentences and moments of vivid imagery that made the story not at all an unpleasant thing. The idea, not the execution, reminded me of those Von Daniken paperbacks, CHARIOTS OF THE GODS etc.

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM continues.... It's interesting to see the various power games that went on. Get a group of people together (like minded or not) and immediately political machinations begin. Such is the nature of the beast. Pity we never did get that postwar utopia. But then again, utopia's are such personal things.

The poetry was fine. I am quite pleased to be in such company, even if my poem was the crudest, lumpiest of the lot. Ah well, I write because I love writing, not because I'm particularly good at it.

The artwork was up to its usual high standard. Jozef Szekeres' sea serpent particularly appealed. Nice to have a colour cover too; Kurt Stone's work is of consistently high quality. And I loved that purple background! The backcover comic worked fairly well, being straight to the point and lyrical. Dystopias/utopias, the future is full of them.

Encyclopedias are useful and James Verran's advice sounds true enough. Just last year I bought THE MODERN REFERENCE ENCYCLOPEDIA, the 1939 edition, picked it up at the markets for a \$1.50. It's in very good condition and very entertaining. As James points out, things have certainly changed since then. Or have they. (10.3.94)

JOHN FRANCIS HAINES, 5 Cross Farm, Station Rd, Padgate, Warrington WA2 0QG, England.

I enjoyed J. C. Hartley's SLIP-KNOT [in TM 82] - was it pure coincidence that you had two time-travel poems for the same issue?

[Yes, 'twas. - Ron.]

I'm not going to get sucked into yet another debate on censorship - those wishing to know some of my views on the subject should consult my article, OUT OF THE BLUE in PERIPHERAL VISIONS #12. Likewise, I can't comment on THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY as I've not read it, though my immediate reaction is that any book which provokes such a strong reaction must have something going for it. It will be interesting to see what those who read it think.

As always, Andy Darlington provides a fascinating article. I'd no idea Moorcock was so active, so early. I first came across him in the late sixties when I found his STEALER OF SOULS and got hooked at once. I went through a period when I read just about anything of his I could lay my hands on, but found he got too repetitive

in the end - the same characters kept popping up in different books, and while I know some find this engaging, I find it irritating. At his best he's brilliant, and he's had more impact on sf than most are willing to acknowledge.

I found the Oz fandom piece tedious, JAMES not a bad bit of fiction, and HUNDRED GATES HOLT oddly familiar, has this been published elsewhere? The style was almost Terry Pratchett, perhaps *that's* why it's so familiar. Not sure about that one, I think it's weakened by making you think of another writer. (13.3.94)

RODNEY LEIGHTON, R.R. #3 Pugwash, N.S. CANADA B0K 1LO.

Me, I'm an enigma when it comes to religion. I guess I believe in God, although I ain't fussy how you spell it. Can't stand organized religions and their pomposity and greed. Haven't paid too much attention but I'm beginning to think on this a bit. I have long held a small but neither firm nor ardent belief in reincarnation. Lately, mostly, I consider that once you die, that's it, you rot or burn. On the other hand, my mother is a firm, life-long believer in Christianity, a Baptist and later United, who believes in church and heaven and funerals. Me, I consider funerals barbaric invasions of a person's grief.

However, when the time comes, hopefully not for many years, that Mother has to be buried, that onerous task will doubtless fall on me. I'll arrange for a funeral, because that's what she wants. I don't plan to attend, for which she has said she will forgive me. I fully believe that she will go to Heaven, and that I will be able to "talk" to her. Yet, I, myself, have strong doubts about the existence of such a place as "Heaven".

If you consider that weird, a few weeks ago, I found myself sort of, to all intents, and purposes, praying for the safe arrival of a porno tape. Got an answer, since I did this on the way to the mailbox and the package was there when I got there. Weirder still... some years ago, when things were very bad for me, I recall a number of times looking skyward and screaming: "What the fuck do you want from me, you bastard?" Or similar. No answers. Of course, that is hardly the sort of thing God, by any name, would be apt to answer. Maybe Satan? Perhaps Chris Masters knows?

Enjoyed JAMES. Totally hooked me with the ending; came out of nowhere. Good one.

I've never understood why or how anyone can go on at great length about a book or other publication which that person hated. I mean, ok, you are or feel obligated to read it because it came free for review or some friend requested that you read it. Print the ordering info and: "This book sucked rancid donkey turds." That should do it....

Neat story by Duncan Evans. Why isn't he a pro writer?

Skip to my favourite part of all SF zines, the loccol:

Chris Masters... noble of him to announce that he will never allow anyone to deter him from saying, doing, reading what he wishes, certainly not via censorship (neat term, I like that...). Fully agree with everything in the first part of the loc. But, then, he started ripping strips off Mae Strelkov and I'm thinking: "Jesus, Ron, why did you print this crap?" Okay, she's a little old lady in Argentina who pissed the guy off. Is that any reason for such a vitriolic attack, in print? But, I see she dealt with it and him in a competent and delightful manner. I guess anyone who has been around sf or any small press fandom for any amount of time and who is willing to express their opinions publicly must expect to be called names from time to time; raked over the coals and lambasted by assholes and idiots. Everyone has to learn how to deal with such things in whatever style suits them best. Hell, I've been called all sorts of things and am expecting to be called more. I don't recall ever calling anyone a loony. I've told people their ideas are completely ridiculous and so are they. Guess there ain't much difference.

One of the offshoots of my fooling about in SFandom is that I met a horror writer, who started sending me copies of his books and thus I've started reading some Horror. I agree with Mae (I'm tempted to call her Mrs. Strelkov but suspect it would piss her off) that underplayed horror is much more exciting than eat 'em, screw 'em, kill 'em stuff. Psychological horror is quite fascinating.

As is much of what I have read which the lady has written. She is to be admired and respected! Imagine! 76 and still doing all the things she does! Of course, she is the same age as my mother and also, my paternal grandfather founded and ran a landscaping business when he was about 65 and ran it himself until he was 80

something. Tried to get my aunt in bed with him when he was 98, the silly old goat. Anyway, if you're counting votes, I cast mine for publishing material by Mae. (8.3.94)

BUCK COULSON, 2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348, USA.

Nice garish cover; the floating bubbles or whatever they are remind me of Easter eggs.

Yes, encyclopedias are useful; we bought an AMERICANA a few years after we got married. Juanita had been hinting about a washing machine, and when the salesman came around I told her she had her choice; encyclopedia or a washer. We couldn't afford both right then. She took the books and we never did get a washer. I wouldn't use it for history references, but then we have an entire room of history and biography books. Lots of other uses, such as looking up people mentioned in books. (Who the hell is Wendel Jamnitzer? Look him up...)

Enjoyed Darlington's article. I always liked Mercury's "Twilight Zone", tho I never really believed it. Never read most of the stories Darlington mentioned, though I read others set on Mercury.

The Australian history still hasn't reached the point at which I entered fandom, so it's all new to me.

No, I wouldn't frown or grimace at anything on the Oz cultural makeup. I do chuckle now and then, but I do that at parts of everyone's cultural makeup. Even mine... though mine of course is superior to other people's.

I don't recall every using the term "fen", though I may have. The use seems to be obvious; man-men, fan-fen. I assume the first person to use it wanted something different from the common "fans", hard as it is to believe that a fan would go to an entirely different word just for the sake of being different....

Juanita and I did try an offset system of publishing once. It lasted for half an issue of YANDRO and we traded the offset press in for a secondhand Gestetner. Enough is enough. Later on, a fan who did use an offset press mentioned that he usually ran 300 sheets through it just to get it set properly every time it was turned on. We were glad we'd traded.

It's not the problem of children coming to school armed that causes trouble; it's what they do with the arms once they get there. I always had a pocket knife at school, every boy did. For a time I carried a switchblade, of the "legal" length of 4.25 inches. None of the knives was ever used to damage anyone else. Fists were used now and then; anyone using a knife or gun would have been ostracised as someone too cowardly to use his fists. I had guns, including handguns, when I was still a schoolboy, but there was no reason to carry them to school. Now, it seems, there is a reason, and what the adults need to go after is that reason; outlaw it, rather than inanimate weaponry, because outlawing objects doesn't work.

I disagree a bit with Harry Andruschak; integration was needed in the US schools long before it was done. In fact, one of the reasons it failed to produce equality or reduce black-white tensions was that it should have been done in 1865, rather than when it was finally established. There was no particular reason for science courses being dropped, though it was supposedly done because blacks coming into integrated schools had been badly taught previously (true in a lot of cases) and couldn't keep up. Tough; lots of white kids couldn't pass science courses either. Giving them a bit more than they can handle is better than giving them less.

Julie Hawkins is probably right about "the church has always been there". Or at least a church or religion; Christianity hasn't, though an almost-2000-year run isn't bad. I note that AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY lists "moral" and "ethics" as synonyms. I've always felt that "morals" has a religious connotation; an atheist can have ethics but can't have morals. Presumably that's considered nit-picking.

For Pavel Viaznikov: I have English-Language editions in hardcover or trade paperback of the following Strugatsky books: NOON: 22ND CENTURY; BEETLE IN THE ANTHILL; PRISONERS OF POWER; THE UGLY SWANS; SPACE APPRENTICE and two books containing a pair of novellas, ROADSIDE PICNIC/TALE OF THE TROIKA and FAR RAINBOW/THE SECOND INVASION FROM MARS. I only have one or two other Russian authors; I collected the Strugatskys because I like them, though there are still a couple of them I haven't got around to reading. (11.3.94)

SYDNEY J. BOUNDS, 27 Borough Rd., Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 6BD, England.

Liked the cover layout [in TM 82] and Fox's illustration.

Nonfiction has it all over the stories and poems this issue. Tepper's book must be pretty good to get Bradley Row so hot under the collar. I like Tonia's illo on page 6.

Buck Coulson was fascinating on the little-known magazines, most of which I've never seen.

Andrew D was good on Moorcock, but though Mike was prolific, there were other writers around at that time! Desmond Reid was a house name and covered a lot of other writers.

A picture of Jack Chandler (looking remarkably young); Jack was an old friend of mine from those days. The history of Australian fandom is fine, but who is Graham Stone who does the footnotes to somebody else's article? Mention of Mike Rosenblum brings back memories.

[Graham is mentioned in the history later. As to the footnotes - I asked him for comments, as someone else from that period and putting them in footnotes, rather than at the end seemed a better use of them. - Ron.]

Bill Congreve makes me want to read Terry Dowling, so hopefully some of his books will turn up here one day.

An interesting bunch of letters, as usual. Two corrections, please. My postal code is KT2 6BD. And the author of THE SILVER PIGS is Lindsey Davis.

I've read some Dean Koontz; some I liked, some I thought not so good.

Nice to see that Sean Williams won one of the LRon awards.

I haven't read any of the books reviewed ... where does the time go? (12.3.94)

PAMELA J. BOAL, 4 Westfield Way Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7EW, England.

What a relief! When I saw this zine folded in three with just one staple on the corner I thought this can't be THE MENTOR, but it is, just the same quality of content and clarity of presentation I've come to expect over the years.

Organised religions with formalised beliefs and tenets observed by an whole society or group arise in response to needs. Rules for survival, explanations for observed phenomena, hopes of influencing those phenomena to improve the group's well being or to appease and avert the wrath of the forces that threaten the groups well being. For centuries religion and science were one and those trained in the mysteries were the leaders of the group, even when state and religion became separate authorities they worked together and had more or less equal hold over the populace. Societies develop, sections which recognise themselves as a group with a common identity (country, tribe) challenged or were challenged by environment or other group, time was ripe for a new religion.

Now, except in a diminishing number of Islamic countries, Church (organised religion) State and Science are entirely separate (though in some Roman Catholic countries the links are still strong) the vast majority of the populace having no interest in those establishments, feeling they have little relevance to their lives except in making their (the populace) life harder. There are no heroes or leaders except for small special interest groups who feel themselves outside of society and deprived of its amenities. Some people, such as Mother Theresa, gain respect across the divide of class, culture, education etc but are not leaders except to a limited number, in Mother Theresa's case those who support her work or work in her sisterhood. People who seek fundamental truths and spiritual paths turn not to new religions but to old ones, religions that more often than not say here are or have been teachers but it is up to each individual to find their own path. Leaders of new cults or off-shoots of the major religions in the West have all too often shown to have feet of clay, frequently clay tainted with greed. I think it highly unlikely that a new religion will arise or that a Messiah will come along to help us out of the rudderless mess that the world seems to be in. Possibly there may be moves towards simpler ways of living and an acceptance and use of complementary medicines and of old religions such as Wicca. That though is the swing of the cultural pendulum rather than anything fundamentally new.

Both stories are extremely well written mood pieces, though I did prefer JAMES, unless one is a saint or an absolute sinner (must

keep the religious theme going) guilt is a common experience that a reader can relate to. In HUNDRED GATES HOLT it was obvious that Nanny Bane was going to get her come uppance in just the way she did. Now if Duncan could match up his powerful imagery and excellent pace of story telling with a more surprising twist in the tail of his story I would predict a very successful author waiting in the wings.

As always the articles and regular columns are interesting and informative. The letters also as always are lively though frankly I find Chris A Masters' letter something of an abomination. I haven't time to go through back TMs but I do not have to know that while Mae Strelkov may strongly express a difference of opinion, she would not resort to personal abuse. Mae replies with a smile and refrains from mentioning how ignorantly uninformed Chris Masters is regarding life and culture (not to mention horticulture, pruning daffodils indeed) outside of his own, I suspect, narrow experience. Wisdom does not always come with age and the trick of long survival does not always command respect but Chris Masters might consider the notion that living life could give better insights than reading a few books, however authoritatively written. (11.3.94)

STEVE JEFFERY, 44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 2XA, UK.

I'll start with your editorial in this issue on faith and religion, which touches on an article ("Viruses of the Mind") by Richard Dawkins, author of THE BLIND WATCHMAKER and THE SELFISH GENE. Here, Dawkins take the idea of a meme (somewhat analogous to the idea of a gene, but in terms of mental processes, ideas or beliefs rather than genetic information) and links the prevalence of religious belief systems to the parasitic self-replication of both somatic and computer (informational) viruses.

The ubiquity of belief systems, whether of organised religion, scientific progress, homeopathy, communism, the market force, or UFOs, does rather suggest some in-built need for faith - a sort of "gullibility gene" - that will latch on to almost anything to satisfy itself. The wonderful thing is that these systems have not just to be unprovable, they can even be demonstrably wrong, for belief in them to persist and propagate. Is there anyone who can claim they don't harbour one irrational belief, superstition or faith in anything?

The two fictions in this issue, by Brent and Duncan, were both good, and Duncan's was wonderfully nasty.

Sandwiched in the middle, though, we come to Bradley Row. This is a classic case of confusing the author with the book. Worse still, the tar and feathers are immediately broken out of what seems a most facile reading and a prosecution based on guilt by implication; a pile of suppositions and the attribution and linking of the words "feminist" and "utopia" (from Row; not, as far as I can tell, anywhere by Tepper herself) to make it seem as if GATE is a manifesto rather than a novel.

Ms Tepper may well be a feminist, but on the evidence of other books (BEAUTY, A PLAGUE OF ANGELS) it is of a more ambivalent than militant stripe. It seems, in fact, a rather woolly form of feminism that says (more explicitly at the end of A PLAGUE OF ANGELS) the hand that rocks the cradle is as much to blame as the hand that wields the sword. That men and women are equally complicity in the ills of the world.

I suspect that Tepper may have tried to look at this by the rather simplistic (but rather snail) device of separating the sexes to see how they both take equally horrendous routes. It's not a great novel. The characterisation and treatment is far too simplistic. But it's certainly not MEIN KAMPF, and it takes a large overstretching of the imagination to see it as a utopia. But Row brings his entire critical armoury of dubious suppositions to bear to break this butterfly on a wheel of his own devising: "It is apparent that", "in what might at first blush appear", "As one can guess", "and it would seem", "which, in my opinion", and the crowing hubris of "the author quite clearly approves..." Row drops into a pit he has already dug for the author when he tries to pull this last one. He knows the author's mind; he is a critic, for God's sake, and is thus far more privy to the author's intent than she is (she only wrote it, presumably completely unconsciously, after all).

Somebody is missing a sense of irony, but in this case I don't think it's Tepper.

Vol Molesworth's Australian Fan History was hugely entertaining, and I don't know any of the personalities, clubs or publications involved. Fan History is often quite marginal to people on

the outside, but this kept me turning the pages. And Graham Stone's first footnote to this article, on the image conjured by the word "fan", is definitely worth bearing in mind. "It's a proud and lonely thing to be a dickhead" somehow doesn't have the same thrilling ring to it.

Rod Marsden (R&R, TM 82) thinks I have a problem with drawings of female parts. Wrong, I have a problem with bad drawings of female parts, gross caricatures that think big, misshapen tits and bums are inherently amusing or shocking. Perhaps they are, if you find seaside postcards "racy" stuff. But compare this to Gaiman's SANDMAN, Alan Moore or Mobeus and tell me who's breaking the fresh ground.

I liked the cover of TM 81. As for the "relieving" absence of external genitalia; being cold blooded, dinosaurs don't need a scrotal sac to keep sperm a few degrees cooler than deep body temperature. And breasts would be equally pointless on creatures that lay eggs (artistic licence is no excuse for sloppy thinking). I'm still concerned with that odd, over-jointed anatomy. Perhaps an animation would help.

Ah, someone who thinks that flinging "hot" words around (count them: one per sentence) are evidence of artistic freedom. And fuck anyone else. See, this letter now qualifies as "art" and if you object to it you must be a small, grubby, narrow minded bigot. So there. Q.E.D.

Is death metal extreme - or just hilariously silly?

Art may shock or offend. Offence is not automatically art. Why do certain people seem to have such a large amount of difficulty with this concept? If the duty of art, though, is to challenge limits (of subject, skill or technique) then what can claim to be art when all the brakes are taken off? Real art will always look for a barrier to test itself against, and if one isn't there an artist will often impose one. Witness minimalism, impressionism, pointillism and a whole host of other -isms. Maybe I'd feel more engaged in this thing if I'd seen a horror graphic or novel that confronted me on more than a purely visceral level. For me, that's not good enough and a good curry works just as well. I still think the single most disturbing image I've ever come across is the eyeball sequence in Bunel's UN CHIEN ANDALOU. Little else has come close to the naked chill of that moment. (17.3.94)

JOHN J. ALDERSON, Havelock, VIC 3465.

I received THE MENTOR 83 and enjoyed it, despite the bilious colour of the cover.

I have decided to devote this year to serious writing (???) and have come up for air and a LOC between chapters of a strange novel I have found myself writing.

Yesterday I had a visit from the editor of the local paper who quizzed me on how I became an historian and who got trapped into sampling one of my 1972 wines, and who hurriedly returned to his car for his camera and took me with a vacant look in my eye and a glass of an old Tokay in my hand. Copies of this is available at a nominal charge from THE LOCAL RAG, Maryborough.

Mike Hallstone suggests that I might be a "revisionist" historian, and that not "unkindly". Well I don't know what a "revisionist" in anything is, though according to the Chinese it's something pretty awful, on a par with being called "recalcitrant" or Bob Hawke's "silly old bugger". But I guess Mike means someone who takes a new look at history and as far as that goes I'll wear that label proudly, having spent most of my research time checking original sources, and that usually with extreme scepticism. In theory at least we historians have all the facts we are likely to get, and each generation re-interprets them. Notwithstanding, the factual basis of much history is almost non-existent. To make it worse there is an active re-writing of history in (say Australia) by the Aborigines and by the feminists with the free invention of facts and their woeful suppression.

Buck Coulson's memory is a little faulty in remembering that Ayers Rock is entirely covered by trees. But apart from the immediate area surrounding the Big Gibber and watered by its run-off, the Rock has far more trees than the desert outside. Of course trees make soil, they make it out of sand and out of clay, gathering rarish minerals and depositing them on the surface in an organic form, and it is that top few inches which is soil, not the sterile stuff underneath.

I have just heard THE SCIENCE REPORT on the A.B.C., a little piece dealing with STAR TREK, that is the latest series. It seems to still start with a fanfare worthy of 20th Century Fox, but now (I didn't

notice if they preserved the split infinitive) "where no-one has gone before" instead of "where no man has gone before," which is patently untrue because always someone has gone before and the ringing achievement of man the explorer is also missing. It is in fact an anticlimax. The use of "one" instead of "man" is a belittlement of some antiquity. The Gauls told the Romans that the inhabitants of the "tight little isle" were "Britons", that is, "painted ones" and was a direct questioning as to whether or not the chappies across the Channel were human. (There was no question about my ancestors in the north of course, but I also had some ancestors in the south and I still feel slighted... down with the frog-eaters I say...). But the use of "one" instead of "man" in STAR TREK is incongruous because they are searching out "ones" who have gone before. Sadly, when politics interferes with language, language becomes debauched. (21.3.94)

GLEN CHAPMAN, 29 Janice St, Seven Hills, NSW 2147

The criteria I used to judge if short stories are good or not is simple. After a day if I can still recall the plot line in detail, catch myself pondering aspects of the story, or, finally is the story just as good after a re-read.

STAR RISE OVER HADES, by Andrew Sullivan achieved all three. Without going overboard, I would consider this story to be the finest piece of fiction I've read in THE MENTOR.

The double narrative is a wonderful tool, particularly effective towards the end of the story. I was left guessing what the child's fate would finally be. Sadly it's not the ending I'd hoped for, but life's a little like that.

Brent Lillie's offering WAVECAVE was a similar standard, all the ingredients are there, good setting, strong character development. Unfortunately the last third of the story reads like a synopsis for something longer, too many elements introduced too quickly, many left unresolved in the end.

Many thanks to James Verran for the second part of his article on reference books for the struggling writer. I'm in the market for a good concise encyclopedia - very helpful. Something I use with frequency is the series of books BOOK OF LISTS Vol 1 through Vol 4. They are fully indexed and a great source of obscure facts.

One of my pet hates in life is being mis-quoted - Don Boyd has done it. I refer to his letter in TM 83. I was the reader who mentioned "the stuff falling on his head". What I said was that a major concern of people on earth would be malfunctions of the catapult could drop lumps of rock in their lounge rooms while they watch the Sunday afternoon football games.

A few error[s] cropped [up] in Don Boyd's last letter. Firstly the freedom space station is scrapped finito! The Feb appropriations from the U.S. Congress didn't come through, why?, because the principle task of the planned station was to be an observatory - sounds familiar - it should, it's called a Hubble and NASA must have forgotten they had just launched one.

Even if they had launched the thing it wouldn't be serviced by shuttles, but by the new Delta Clipper - single stage orbiter (DC-Y) expected to come on-line around the turn of the century (test flights scheduled for Oct 98).

Where the fuck do you get round ball bearings. No such thing! You must be talking about the steel balls that are inserted inside ball bearings to make them spin. Already we are producing bearings using sixties technology that seem to have life times in the regions of forty years.

Harry Stine in his recent article COMES THE REVOLUTION in ANALOG Dec 93, draws the comparison of the evolution in the aircraft industry, compared with space technology. Aviation in the period 1919 to 1954 progressed from prop driven bi-planes to the first flight of Boeing's 707 Jetliner. I fail to see any equivalent growth in space technology. For you to say we are 95% there is a total fallacy.

I still stand by my comment that it is all pie in the sky stuff. The first time anyone brought up the idea of large scale space stations was around 47 or 49, the scientist[s] that the U.S. had gained from the German surrender floated the idea of modifying left-over V2 rockets by adding a second stage. It was estimated a total of twenty launches would be needed to lift enough material into space to build the space station. The project was never followed through, not because it couldn't be done, the government didn't want to commit the resources.

Finally an economic study was done by the Enterprise Institute of the U.S. recently as to what conditions need to be met

before private enterprise started going space-side (other than for simple sat launches). The bottom line was than an overall reduction between 97-99% in launch costs, even then it would cost around \$160,000 a tonne to launch. There's few if any cargoes that could be worth enough - in large enough quantities to warrant that kind of expenditure. (24.3.94)

CATHERINE MINTZ, 1810 South Rittenhouse Square, Apt 1708, Philadelphia, PA 19103-5837, USA. (15.3.94)

Thank you for sending issue #82 of THE MENTOR. Even, the postmark was enjoyable, conveying "Christmas Greetings from Australia" in the last week of an unusually bitter winter.

That piece that caught my attention this time was Bradley Row's A BOOK FOR BURNING, commending on Sheri Tepper's THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY. William L. Clovis and I did an interview with Tepper which was published last spring in QUANTUM, and I think Row's distaste for the story caused him to miss the author's intended point. Tepper is not proposing a feminist Utopia, but asking, "If women had the kind of power men have often had, would they do better or worse than men have done?" She answers, "Better, but not much." The ending of THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY is happy only in that the principle character gets to be one of the exploiters rather than the exploited. The book is strident, and its science-fictional premises are not well-worked-out, but that hardly makes it material for a bonfire.

I read Andrew Darlington's piece on Moorcock twice, and really enjoyed it both times. I hope he does more work for you.

PAVEL A. VIAZNIKOV, PO Box 344, 125502 Moscow A502, Russia.

I found A BOOK FOR BURNING by Bradley Row hitting the mark and am now expecting the next TM, with letters from both his opponents and supporters. I, for one, belong to the latter. I've met some w-libs, and may I say that Nature never produced more revolting creatures since the late Pleistocene. Aggressive, crude and doing their best to look and act ugly.... Besides, in this country we need deliberation of women; you see, they work here, and usually have no time for the family. And we, the mammals, are created with certain specialisation for the sexes. Well, we are also sentient and can change our own nature. So I can agree that the situation can be, as an exception, reversed, with a man taking care of the progeny and the woman supplying the means of subsistence for the family. But one of the parents must be a homekeeper (not a housekeeper, but a homekeeper). And so it is that both physiologically and psychologically females of our species are better equipped for this purpose.

By the way, one of my friends once wrote a SF story in which there were two powerful and evil extremist forces - the Green Army of Rainbow and the World Ladyslation Strike Force... the first protecting nature with nuclear forces and the second doing basically the same that Ms. Tepper's characters did - but with less subtlety. They also kept saying about males only thinking of rape - and one of the characters said that "libbers are possessed by their idea exactly because of raping. I mean, some went lib because they were raped, and some - because they were not. Who would, for example, want to rape Commander Shark?... That's what makes her so dangerous."

Do not think that I hate women; I do not. But libs are the plague of our century - [or] one of.

As for the movies, I leave facts and dates to Andrey Lubenski, as he seems at home with scientific work like that. But I shall try to give you some idea of our SF & F films.

Now we mostly see foreign (US, usually) films, and 90% of these are junk. But cinema theatre directors seem to believe that they can get better money with these... what's especially bad is that they are basically right in that. You can also buy videotapes - for US\$15 to \$40 in good shops, and these will be good copies, not translated, usually; or, for US\$5 to \$20, pirate copies of tapes, produced by Hong Kong or perhaps Mordor companies - from vendors or small kiosks. What's interesting is where and how these copies are originally obtained: for example, I first saw a cassette with a (bad) copy of JURASSIC PARK in a kiosk on the same day when I read in a newspaper that in the next week this tape will be introduced to the US video market. But, again, like with books, that's how we first got acquainted with foreign films - through pirate copies, seen secretly at homes of lucky and proud owners of rare VCRs (which could be

confiscated for distribution of "pornography" (for example, 9½ WEEKS or BARBARELLA) or "anti-Soviet ideology" (like STAR WARS, where Darth Vader's name resembles that of a character of Ivan Efremov's novel THE ANDROMEDA NEBULA Dar Veter and where Lucas glorified the aggressive imperialist plans of the leader of the world reactionary powers' militarist Ronald Regan...).

But back to Russian films.

The first, as far as I know, SF film was AELITA, from the novel by Alexey Tolstoy; the novel is good and the film is a little funny, as most of those old movies of the first quarter of the century are. After that, there was TO THE MOON, from the book by the famous scientist, the "father of cosmonautics", Konstantin Tsiolkovsky. A good film with sound scientific background and good effects; the best, I think, SF movie before WW2 in the USSR (hardly a big record, taking into account that SF films were a rarity until recently), but I believe it could easily get into the top ten of SF films of the first half of the century, if not by its plot (weak - just a description of a successful flight of the spaceships *Motherland (Rodina)* and *Joseph Stalin* (need a translation?) there and back again, with an inevitable boy on board (for some reason, most SF authors introduced a kid, a Young Pioneer, into their stories - one could stow away on an underground missile, doing the research of the Earth's core, while another would be picked up by the crew of a Soviet rocket-propelled submarine, fulfilling the test/scientific/military mission after the ship on which the boy had been a passenger was sunk by an enemy (Japanese, then) torpedo (the Japanese were working on their own project of controlling the ocean paths by means of tiny torpedoes, launched from secret underwater bases)...)

Again - this is in no way a serious article on the history of Soviet SF films, but a short review with mentioning of some landmarks. So, there was another film about just a space voyage - THE SKY CALLS US, an accurate (by the standards of the 1950s) description of the launching of a manned spaceship. It was more a science fact popularisation than SF.

Another film, PLANET OF STORMS, was made more than a decade later, based on the novel by Alexander Kazantsev, once very popular and after *perestroika* much despised for weak literature and strong political moves against younger writers. In this film, Russian spacemen land on Venus, explore it, save poor Americans who put too much hope into a robot which, unfortunately, was made without the Asimov Laws, and to top their success, discover traces of a human civilisation.

For some time, there was little SF on the screens. But in the 1970s the boom came. Oh, nothing like dozens of SF films a year like "beyond-the-hill" (abroad); but there were some, still. Most of them were just poor. For example, STAR INSPECTOR: an investigator found a nest of mad & evil militarists on a planetary base (I do not remember exactly but think that it was on the Moon). Naturally, he deals with them and, alone, wins over the Bad Guys. It's fun, though, to see the props: spacecraft which look like kitchen utensils - like colanders, ladies and mixers... there also was the artificial brain DUBOS (funny name, as it sounds like it is derived from "dub" - "oak", in spoken Russian also "a fool"), protected by a "platan field" ("platan" is exactly what it looks like - a platan tree). In another movie, THE ORION LOOP, a character gets, as a present, a cast medallion made of metal, "twice the weight of uranium", shaped like the cross-section of a beer can, and half an inch thick. Poor man!

There were good films, too. First to be named is SOLARIS, directed by the famous Andrey Tarkovsky and based on a novel by the famous Polish writer Stanislaw Lem (try to get a copy!). An interesting feature is that they had little money and used corrugated cardboard boxes to build their space station - with excellent results. The film is about a planet, covered with a single sentient being, the Ocean. People explore it, and it explores people - for example, by materialising images from the depths of their brains, mostly, for some reason, connected with some past guilt and thus creating copies of (now dead) people, which (the worst part!) cannot exist apart from the person whose brain was used by the Ocean.

Much later Tarkovsky made STALKER based on ROAD-SIDE PICNIC by the Strugatsky brothers. Perhaps you've seen it? It was shown abroad. A strange and "difficult" film.

[I have seen portions of STALKER, mostly because the video player was acting up. I've also seen PLANET OF STORMS (at

an SF Convention here in Australia and on TV) as well as SOLARIS, which was received well in Australian film theatres - Ron.]

There was VIY - a horror fantasy based on a well-known story by XIX century Nikolay Gogol; the novel is translated into English and I also advise you to read it. The only horror fantasy in a long period, and only permitted because of Gogol's fame.

Several films for children were made, too. Of those, two were especially interesting: FROM EARTH TO CASSIOPEA and its sequel, YOUTHS IN THE UNIVERSE. They became favourites of Russian kids. The plot is: the USSR builds a nuclear spaceship invented by a 14-year old genius, and the crew is made up of 13-14 year-old boys and girls, so that they could reach a Cassiopea from which strange signals are received, and live to come back. (Well, the real reason was to make the story more interesting for teenagers). So they take off (and discover a stowaway, a "problem" boy, aboard). But due to the latter's misbehaviour, the starship's drives start working "wrong", the ship goes much faster than light, and the kids reach their destination still 14 years old. There they discover an empty planet, populated only with robots - the Rulers and the Executors (i.e. those who execute orders). The robots were designed to provide happiness for the people, but later decided, Buddhist-like, that suffering is brought by desires and, un-Buddhist-like, started to employ some psychotechnic machines to turn their own creators into mindless, always smiling idiots (who later died out as they had no desire for propagating the species). The rest of the people found refuge on a giant orbital station, while the young explorers landed right among the robots, who were happy to receive new customers. Needless to say, the good guys win.

After that, several other films for children were made: THE VIOLET GLOBE, PER ASPERA AD ASTRA, QUEST FROM THE FUTURE and THE ADVENTURES OF THE ELECTRONIC BOY ROBOT (the latter two were TV serials, well known mostly due to good songs used in them). And PER ASPERA AD ASTRA is an ecology disaster story - and not a bad one.

Another of the best was LETTERS FROM A DEAD MAN - this one was about a "nuclear winter". And an excellent fantasy? Horror? I don't know - MR. DECORATOR, based on stories by Alexander Grin. A young, talented decadent artist is hired to decorate the windows of a jewellery shop (it's the beginning of the century). For that, he makes a wax figure of a girl dying of tuberculosis. But several years later the artist meets her again, now as the wife of a rich industrialist. But she doesn't recognise the artist, and he, later, suddenly sees her grave. He finds out that the woman is really his own creation, a wax doll, who took life from the prototype. And, in order to keep the secret, the doll kills first her husband, and then, her creator.... The work of the operator and the artist in the film is really good, and the spirit of decadence and of modernist art is maintained superbly.

One cannot miss several good SF animated cartoons. The most famous in this country is THE MYSTERY OF THE THIRD PLANET, after the novel for children by Kir Bulychov (an expedition which catches and buys animals for zoos, saves a space captain). Then, there are short cartoons: TESTING GROUND (after a story by S. Zolovskiy: the military (presumably American) test on a desert island a new robotank, guided to the enemy by their thoughts: it does exactly what the testers do not want it to do; everything goes smoothly until the testers suddenly realise that the tank can perceive their thoughts too - but cannot tell them from the enemy's.... CONTACT (first contact of men with extraterrestrials, made possible by the latter's humming of a popular tune); CONTRACT (after a story by Robert Sheckley); QUIET BRAIN (after a story by Ray Bradbury - the one about a robo-house, which outlived its owners after a nuclear war); BATTLE (after a story by Stephen King - about toy soldiers, remember?) and HUNTING (ecology again), and others.

Apart from these, there were TV plays; some were regularly shown as part of a popular, now dead, TV program THIS IS A FANTASTIC WORLD, hosted by pilot cosmonaut Grechko; those were mostly good. Once, St. Petersburg TV showed THE HOBBIT and THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING as TV plays - horrible! When a punkish fellow with multicoloured hair and wearing silver overalls entered, proclaiming itself "The Horrible, Cruel and Evil Spirit of the Tomb" (guess what's meant!), I was so disgusted that I just switched my TV set off.

Of course, the above is just a very brief survey of just several films; I cannot say that I am a specialist, equipped to make a good, research article about Russian SF&F cinema - this task I, with hope, leave to Andrey Lubenski.

There was a surprise question from Brian Earl Brown - how come people managed to make 200-p. printouts and make whole libraries of them, and why didn't they use xerox? Well, they did it after work, and there were not very many such people; and xeroxes were under a more strict control, out of fear that they could be used for distribution of anti-Communist propaganda (literature included). You cannot make too many copies, using only a dot-matrix printer! Of course, home PCs were unavailable, - hardly available even in the early 1980s - so people used office stuff. I've seen a couple of collections of bound printouts; and I even have a collection of horror stories made this way, and a once forbidden novel by the Strugatsky brothers, just photocopied - not xeroxed, but photographed and then printed on big sheets of photo paper, A4 size, just like you would have photos of your grandparents printed. Imagine that! And a friend of mine had several books done as blueprints - do you remember those old bluish or pink copies of technical drawings?.... (24.3.94)

LLOYD PENNEY, 412-4 Lisa St., Brampton, ON, Canada L6T 4B6.

JAMES by Brent Lillie is a disturbing and confusing little tale. Does James have precognition here? The time frames shift back and forth so much, it's hard to know how old James is/was/will be. If this confusion can be solved, it could be a nice cautionary tale.

I hope that Buck Coulson can comment on the newest incarnation of GALAXY, which has been revived by a descendant of H. L. Gold's, and published somewhere in Nevada. I think the first issue is now out. Also, AMAZING is in hiatus after yet more tinkering, courtesy of TSR. Small magazines try to fill the gap that the pulps seem to have created, and the first magazine I can think of is ON SPEC, the only current Canadian SF fiction magazine that bills itself as Canada's SF magazine, but actually caters to western Canadians only, leaving the easterners to deal with the publishers in New York.

Vol Molesworth's first chapter of his history of Australian fandom is so familiar... not by personal experience, but by the reading of books like Moskowitz's IMMORTAL STORM and Warner's ALL OUR YESTERDAYS and A WEALTH OF FABLE. The fans gather together, make grandiose plans, lose heart or start to fight, and break up. (The more things change, the more they stay the same... the local Trek fans here are doing the same thing. They also do this with cons.) Molesworth's Moskowitz-like pure relating of the events in chronological order is spiced up by Graham Stone's commentary, which I hope will remain in future chapters. Any plans to collect all these chapters into a book?

[Yes, that is the idea. I'm running it first in TM to try out layouts and get a wider audience. I've already printed Molesworth's HISTORY once before, but this time it will be laser printed, rather than duplicated. - Ron.]

Bill Donoho echoes the feelings of many about DHALGREN. I tried to read it, couldn't, and sold it to some unsuspecting neofan, who I'm sure has either passed it on to someone else, or plowed it into the garden for compost. The Ottawa SF club joked about the book for years, and one member wrote diatribe after diatribe about the potential uses for the book (reading it not being one).

[When I first tried to read it several years after it was originally published, I only got about ten pages into it. Recently, when I received a review copy, I read it all the way through. I admit it took some gritting of my teeth in order to get past the slow bits - and there were quite a few chapters of them, but I did finish it. - Ron.]

For those who like Kristine Kathryn Rusch's fiction... she has teamed up with her husband, Dean Wesley Smith, to write, of all things, a Star Trek: Deep Space Nine novel. They have written under the name of Sandy Schofield, which is the name of their new baby. Can she write Trek as well as she writes general SF? (27.3.94)

DEREK PICKLES, 44 Rooley Lane, Bankfoot, Bradford, W. Yorkshire BO5 8LX, England.

Liked the empty Anglo-Saxon cornucopia on the cover [of THE MENTOR 82] - all the goodies that were in it are now inside the magazine.

Brent Lillie's story is disturbing, too much like a dream I had the other night in its surreal atmosphere.

Buck Coulson's trawl through short-lived prozines brought back lots of memories. I can remember some of the stories. Because I was in the book trade from 1947-1951 (part-time), 1951-1963 (full-time), 1963-1968 (part-time), and specialised in SF & F I saw all the magazines and books. I collected quite a number of magazines, GALAXY & GALAXY NOVELS from the first issues, British edition ASTOUNDING SF and UNKNOWN from first issues, also all the British SF mags - NEW WORLDS, NEBULA SF, TALES OF WONDER, and the rest. Unfortunately financial pressures in the late 60s/early 70s forced me to sell the lot, pity as they would have been worth a few quid today.

I found Vol Molesworth's first episode of the history of Australian fandom fascinating. I hope that you can send me MENTORs with the rest of the story. I know almost all the names mentioned as they were active in the 40s and 50s and I exchanged fanzines and letters with Australian fans.

As usual I enjoyed the letter column, what a spread of topics - atheism to censorship to a Jacobite monarch sitting on the English throne. Well, we could always swap one German family for another, would make a change if we had an English monarch for the first time since Harold. (30.3.94)

JOHN TIPPER, PO Box 487, Strathfield, NSW 2135.

A HISTORY OF AUST FANDOM.... This is a "history"? Good grief, never have I read anything so pretentious. Why do I continue to read it? Tell me, someone. Regarding Graham's note (1) on p. 15 of TM 82: "Anyone who calls himself a 'fan' is declaring 'Pay no attention to me, I'm a dickhead.'" Well, the way some of the characters in this "history" carry on, brands them as "Dickheads" of the highest order! Amusing stuff. On with the next chapter....

Happy to see you're using artwork from Queensland's Tonia Walden. One of my favourite people and a fine artist, as well.

A BOOK FOR BURNING. Bradley Row? A pseudonym, perhaps. Why read past the first page of a book which doesn't appeal? The reviewer has fallen hook, line and sinker into the author's hands. The World would be a much more relaxing place if women ran it. Go to it, girls.

The problem with commenting on stories some time after one has digested them is, the punch has been diluted. HUNDRED GATES HOLT still has a jolt, though. Good one, Duncan.

Tame stuff in the locs. Mae Strelkov is a character I'd like to meet, someday. So rare to find anyone in these pages with a sense of humour. Life on Earth is too short to take it seriously. I'm looking forward to what comes next to make my mark. Chew on that one, folks.

STAR RISE OVER HADES in TM 83 was well-written but depressing. What ever happened to happy endings? No doubt the writer of this story flagellates himself at first light each day. Brent Lillie's WAVECAVE came as a pleasant change, but of course, I can't recall this writer having ever written a story that didn't give me a lift.

I REMEMBER HELL PLANET, MERCURY: are you going to work your way out through the solar system, Andrew? The JS artwork on p. 19 is a ripper.

To the lettercol where I see Glen Chapman crawling to Peter Brodie. A reversal of Glen's previous tactics. I haven't a clue what you mean when you say I "... raises a good point about Stephen King". I like Kingy, Glenny! So my good point would be, by your judgement, a bad point. King has a rare understanding of what the public wants to read a year or more down the track. That's something most aspiring of writers these days would do well to emulate.

Here types another RED DWARF fan. As Pamela Boal writes, this is a situation comedy, and if the situation happens to be out of this world, that doesn't mean it has to be judged as a failed attempt at SF. In fact, I see it as a very successful attempt. (Subject to work commitments, Robert Llewellyn, Kryten in RD, will be GOH at COMEDYCON this coming September. Details available from PO Box 627, Ryde, NSW 2112). The biggest sf novel of 1960-61? I recall A FALL OF MOONDUST arriving as a Christmas present, so that qualifies in my memory. (3.4.94)

SHANE DIX, 1/14 Arthur St, Richmond, SA 5033.

Well strap me on top of an anthill and plug my ears with jam. So I was wrong about the Duran/Durand bit, eh? I stand corrected, I guess. I will also never again use the PICTORIAL HISTORY OF

SCIENCE FICTION FILMS (David Shimpan; 1985; 172 pp; Hamlyn Publishing; \$9.95*) as a source of reference. Mind you, Petey, I must say that I thought you were very restrained in your reply. (After all, you're normally very forward when it comes to being backward... or something like that, anyway.) Could it be that despite everything we've been through you still have a soft spot for li'l ol' me?

(* Don't mean to steal your thunder here, Bill.)

Bill Donaho, Andrew Andruschak and Lester Del Rey all failed to complete DHALGREN, eh? I gave a friend my own copy after I had finished reading it, insisting that he simply had to read it. Two weeks and fifty pages later he returned it to me with a shake of the head and a shrug of the shoulders, offering his considered opinion that it was exactly the biggest load of crap he had ever had the misfortune to lay eyes upon. However, I feel confident that those that did get something out of the book would outnumber those that didn't. It just has a certain... *je ne sais quoi*. But in the end it all comes down to taste, right? I mean, someone once told me that RAMA II was an excellent book. I gave up after about 100 pages. Bored shitless, I was.

Censorship: Rod Marsden is quite right, of course, with his comments from TM #82. Extracting the "nastiness" from books and films, etc, will not miraculously cure the world's ills. I wouldn't worry too much about it though, Rod. The article in QUADRANT was merely the opinions of the editor. It should be taken with a pinch of salt - as should the idea that much of the stuff these people want to censor can be called "art". And Chris, while I agree to some extent with your own sentiments on the subject of censorship, I'd be interested to know what your feelings are in regards to censorship for children (and I don't mean simply whether we should be banning the likes of THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE, either).

TM is still way ahead of its time. By about four or five months according to my calculations. At this rate, Ron, we're going to be getting Christmas issues before we've even had Easter.

[You've convinced me - see the masthead for this issue. -

Ron.]

Striking cover for TM #83, by the way.

(8.4.94)

Shorties:

SHOLA PAICE, New Era Publications, 68-72 Wentworth Ave, Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

To Press or Not To Press. Apologies to all MENTOR letter writers, yes Buck Coulson you are right, Press Releases do not belong in letter columns, next time I double check and put Press Release in bold. The Press Release also forgot to mention the other great Australian writers and artists who have won the Writers of the Future Contest, James Verran, Bill Esrac and Shaun Tan who won the Illustrators of the Future Contest. By the time of the next MENTOR, we will know who won the Australian Ditmar Award, fingers crossed for Sean Williams..... 1: Letters. 0: Press Releases:

SCIENCE FICTION COMPETITION

LIVE FROM NEP ENTERPRISE COMES THE FIRST OF MANY.... A RIDDLE IN SPACE

IN A SERIES WRITTEN IN 1980'S EARTH IS REFERRED TO AS BLITO - P3...

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE SERIES AND WHO WROTE IT? ALL CORRECT ANSWERS WILL RECEIVE A FREE POSTER - SHOLA PAICE. (22.3.94)

WAHF:

Jim Verran, Alan Stewart, John Millard, Graham Stone, Roy Chambers, Marie-Louise Stephens, Louise Hollingberry, Lyn McConchie (who didn't find anything to comment on in TM 82), Brian McCrowe, DF Lewis, Darren Goossens, R'ykandar Korra'ti, Russell Farr, Pauline Scarf, Ron Ward, Colin Steele, Michael Hailstone and Peggy Ranson..

Reviews



FINAL BLACKOUT by L. Ron Hubbard. New Era pb, dist in Aust by New Era Publications. (C) 1940. 206 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Another of Hubbard's older novels - this time from WWII. There are several introductions to the novel - one by Algis Budrys and the publisher, and one by Hubbard himself from a later edition.

FINAL BLACKOUT has been out of print for years and I've been looking forward to seeing it again. I had read the story years ago in the pulp magazines, but had forgotten the plot. It is set in WW II. The action takes place some years into the war. The Lieutenant, the hero of the novel, was "born in an air raid shelter" and later was sent to the war-torn Continent, where he spent 7 years with his small brigade fighting other small groups, as in the devastated countryside there was not much surviving - because of lack of food and the presence of disease.

FINAL BLACKOUT is justifiably called a classic of the genre. The characterisation is as good as any from that period, and the action certainly hasn't aged.

"Recommended".

THUNDERBIRDS/STINGRAY/CAPTAIN SCARLET by John Peel. Virgin pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1993. 249 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

This book is subtitled "The Authorised Programme Guide". Last issue I reviewed the 30th Anniversary book of Dr Who - this time around its Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's turn.

There are certainly fans of **THUNDERBIRDS**, **STINGRAY** and **CAPTAIN SCARLET** - I meet them in passing every couple of weeks. This volume has been produced for them. There is even a section of eight pages of photos from the above TV shows. This is not the point of the book, though. There is an introduction with various interesting facts that I never knew about - for instance, on just what people were the puppets modelled? They were, you know. There is also information background on the puppets themselves, and then each episode is gone into in some depth.

In years to come these shows will continue to have a cult following - here is vital information for their fans.

ECHOES OF FLAME by Jonathan Wylie. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1994. A\$11.95. On sale now.

ECHOES OF FLAME is Book 2 of the Island and Empire series, the first book being **DARK FIRE**.

The novel opens with Admiral Ian Barwick on his flagship sailing into adventure that would end with him ending his life. His life was not the only one ending - others would also end up dead or in great danger. Zalus had been freed from the Xantic Empire, but some of its evil lingered on. Chancellor Verkho was still loose and planning to continue his experiments into sorcery that had unleashed such evil before. Dsordas and Fen find themselves on the way to Xantium in a bid to attempt to restore some order to their world.

Wylie has some good fantasy titles under his belt, and this latest series shows that he can continue to produce captivating novels of epic fantasy. With all the readers of fantasy out there, especially those in the USA, a new author such as Wylie will, since he has shown that he is well able to tell a tale, be amply able to keep those tales coming. And his readers will be pleased that this is another series that he is putting out.

THE STREETS OF ANKH-MORPORK, devised by Stephen Briggs, Assisted by Terry Pratchett. Corgi production, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1993. X # of pages. A\$14.95. On sale now.

Well, how else would you describe a map of Ankh-morpork??

This map is subtitled "Being a concise and possibly even accurate Mapp of the Great City of the Discworld Including Unfeen University and environs! Also finest assortment of avenues, lanes, squares and alleys for your walking pleasure". When you unfold the cover there is a 23 page booklet inside that is an introduction and a short index to places. The map itself is about 72 cm square and is in (suitably aged) full colour.

The map is suitably complex and there are a large number of streets named as well as other buildings and places of interest. If you've read the Discworld novels you will find this map invaluable in following the adventures of the various inhabitants. It is very well drawn and the colouring is just the thing - a sandstone-like brown. Well worth getting for the map-room.

THE FIREBRAND by Marion Zimmer Bradley. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. (C) 1987, 559 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's retelling of the fall of Troy and the fate of some of its inhabitants.

Kassandra was brought up in the upper echelons of Troy - one of the daughters of Priam and Hecuba. She had been brought up in the ways of that city - but one day she visited the temple of Apollo and had a vision of the God talking to her and saying that she was his priestess. She was found by her mother fondling some snakes in a basket in the temple and dragged off. Later she was told that the male person she had seen in another vision was her brother, who had been sent off in the hills to try to rid the city of an omen that the son would help destroy it.

As with Bradley's other novel, **THE MISTS OF AVALON**, this tale is told from the woman's point of view - for instance there are Amazons who take care of Kassandra as she is entering her teens. An interesting "historical" fantasy.

LYON'S PRIDE by Anne McCaffrey. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1994. 316 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now.

Volume 4 in The Tower and Hive series and in sequence after **DAMIA'S CHILDREN**.

This is really a sequel to the above novel, as it follows directly after it in time. The three Hive ships that escaped the apparent destruction of the Hive prime planet are being pursued by Federation ships, guided by some of Damia's children, who, of course, are Prime talents. As yet no Queen has been captured alive except for the one that Zara helped. In this novel there is more interaction between the Mardini and the humans and there is also contact between the Hive ships, humans and Mardini.

In **LYON'S PRIDE** there is more action and not so much character interaction, though there is much quipping about "Grandfather" and his talents. SF space opera for those who like their SF straight-forward.

WINTER MOON by Dean Koontz. Headline pb, dist in Aust by Hodder Headline. (C) 1994. 472 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now.

WINTER MOON was inspired by Koontz's short novel **INVASION**. It is more horror than SF.

When Eduardo was in retirement on his ranch in Montana he was getting used to being alone - till the thing knocked on his back door. Later Jack McGarvey, his wife and son inherited a ranch in Montana. Jack had been through a bad stint in the Force and had been glad to move out there. However it was his wife and son who first came up against the mobile aliens in their carriages of corpses who ambulated around the place. When blown apart by firearms, the various parts joined back together and tried to continue their existence. At least they could be blown apart... The author builds up the suspense gradually and lets it all out in the final climax at the end. Or is it really the end of the novel??

Koontz is getting better with his combination of SF and horror - this is one novel that really gets the reader involved in the characters and storyline..

THE IRON DRAGON'S DAUGHTER by Michael Swanwick. Millennium trade pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 343 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

This is the first novel of Swanwick's I've read and I like it.

The world of the Iron Dragon is a strangely likeable one. It has dragons, elves and goblins, but it is set in a world much like ours, with lifts, restaurants and suchlike. Jane was kidnapped from a world different to that which she found herself - later she was put in a factory that made iron dragons, one of which she escaped with. She keeps it and goes on to study how to weave spells and try to lead a life that would get her out of the gutter. She mostly succeeds - but even with the sex and learning spells she thinks that there must be more to life....

THE IRON DRAGON'S DAUGHTER is well written and grabs the reader and drags them along by the arm through all the adventures and problems that beset Jane. I found it pretty hard to put down - well worth reading.

CHILD OF THUNDER by Mickey Zucker Reichert. Millennium TPB, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1993. 478 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now.

A novel in the Last of the Rensai tales.

Cotbey is still undergoing his tests, devised by both gods and men. In this volume he has to complete the Seven Tasks of Wizardry in order to find out if he is acceptable as the next Western Wizard - the Wizard that brings balance to the other Wizards. This time there are women in the fight that are sometimes the equal to the swordsmen in the adventures.

Reichert is a writer who has got it together and the adventures are good enough to draw any reader in. And once in they stay. The books are long and large - they also have many maps and background details such as lines of Wizards, etc. All the volumes loom massive on the shelves both in the shops and the home library.

Not only the plots are well woven, but the characters are well drawn and believable. Excellent fantasy.

WRITERS OF THE FUTURE Vol VIII, Bridge Pb, dist in Aust by New Era Pubs. (C) 1992. 395 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

New Era are releasing and re-releasing these volumes in an effort to catch up to the US publishing dates.

Volume 8 has 17 stories by new authors and are illustrated by new artists. All those in this volume are prize-winners. The stories are: **THE LAST INDIAN WAR** by Brian Burl; **THE WINTERBERRY** by Nicholas DiChario; **BRINGING SISSY HOME** by Astrid Julian; **WINTER NIGHT, WITH KITTENS** by Seam Wilson; **INVISIBLE MAN** by Larry Ferill; **SURROGATE** by M. C. Sumner; **THE COAT OF MANY COLOUR** by Christine Beckert; **TIMEPIECES** by Mike Swope; **ANNE OF A THOUSAND YEARS** by Michael Meltzer; **SUBTERRANEAN PESTS** by James Dorr; **A COLD FRAGRANT AIR** by C. Maria Plieger; **BLUEBLOOD** by Bronwynne Elko; **NOT SIMPLY BLUE** by Gene Bostwick; **SCARY MONSTERS** by Stephen Woodworth; **PALE MARIONETTES** by Mark Budz; **RUNNING BRINGS AROUND THE MOON** by Kevin Kirk and **THE AUGMENTED MAN** by Wendy Rathbone. The artists are: Evan Thomas, Matthew Stork; Jane Walker, Shaun Tan, Bob Hobbs, Darren Albertson, Evan Thomas, Omar Rayyan, Ira Crowe, Allen Koszowski, John Caponigro, Yevgeny Rzhanov and Thomas Wiltaker. There are also articles on writing by various authors.

The winning stories are getting better - there are only a few duds in this lot. Two of the best are **BLUEBLOOD** and **SCARY MONSTERS**.

LEGENDS FROM THE END OF TIME by Michael Moorcock. Millennium TPB, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1976. 232 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

This is Vol 11 of The Tale of The Eternal Champion. The stories included are: **PALE ROSES**; **WHITE STARS**; **ANCIENT SHADOWS**; **CONSTANT FIRE** and **ELRIC AT THE END OF TIME**.

The first four of these stories were published in **NEW WORLDS** magazine in the 1970s and form a well written tale of the Eternal Concubine and some of her adventures. The tales set out well the society of the future with their own customs and morals as they flit about trying to lead lives that to us would be totally boring; or maybe not - time travel and such are still events that call to the adolescent in

us and keep us reading.

With these volumes the bulk of Moorcock's writing are in print and those of his fans who would like them in a permanent set will find that these are well worth the buying. Some of the most individualistic fantasy of the last thirty years.

DAMIA'S CHILDREN by Anne McCaffrey. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Transworld Publishers. (C) 1992. 335 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

The Damia series continues.

Damia and Afra-Raven-Lyon's found eldest children - Laria, Thian, Rojer and Zara had been reared along with their Mordinis partners - the one eyed aliens that the humans had found amongst the stars and which had warned them of the attacking Hives - immense starships that destroyed anything in their paths. Since the Mordinis could communicate by "dream messages" with the humans, their partnership was very valuable.

When three more Hive ships were discovered off some of the inhabited worlds they were attacked, and a Queen captured alive - the first time this had happened. They were all surprised when contact was made by one of Damia's younger children.

This series is getting quite a following and the books are coming out regularly enough to feed the questions of the readers. Good SF, which is sure to bring new readers.

COUNT BRASS by Michael Moorcock. Millennium TPB, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1973. 340 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

This is the last volume of The Tale of The Eternal champion, being Volume 14. The original novels covered by this volume were **COUNT BRASS**; **THE CHAMPION OF GARATHORN** and **THE QUEST FOR TANELORN**. Actually the three tie in well together here and the reader can follow Dorian Hawkmoon as he ventures among the worlds of men and meets others that he had known in his younger days. He also meets beings that manipulate him and he finds that he is Elric as well as Hawkmoon.

At last Millennium has finished the history of The Eternal Champion - one of the figures of the genre that has stamped himself on an age of fantasy. The series covers decades of Moorcock's fantasy and is a cornucopia for his readers who wish to collect and read all his works.

An excellent library of fantasy and adventure; in this format they make both a semi-permanent and an affordable buy.

FIRE BELOW by Matthew J. Costello. Millennium h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. (C) 1994. 264 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now.

This is the second book in a TV series that hasn't reached Australia yet, and may take some time to get here. It is about the submarine *seaQuest* in its search for pirates, unlawful companies and various mining concerns. It also comes up against things in the sea that really should not be there.

The author, Matthew Costello, is the author of several horror and suspense novels - he obviously, from the plot of this novel, hasn't written in the SF genre before. The writing is clear and straightforward - the novel is obviously aimed at the general public - those who would be watching the TV series. I don't know really how this novel will go in Australia before the series is released - not as well as it would go when it is released, I believe.

Along with the straight-forward writing, the plot is also straight-forward, and would be good for those readers who like their SF simple. Still, this may bring others into SF.

CORMAC: THE SEERS by Dwina Murphy-Gibb. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. (C) 1992. 328 pp. A\$11.95. On sale now.

Dwina Murphy-Gibb was born in Ireland and lives there still. **CORMAC: THE SEERS** is the first book in a Celtic odysseys - that tells of Ireland's past glory. Just as long as the reader doesn't dwell there, I suppose.

This first book tells the tale of Cormac mac Airt, one of the High Kings of Ireland. It starts off with the death of Art mac Conn, as he is slain in battle by his nephew, who takes his life as well as the crown of Ireland. That leaves the infant Cormac, who was laid in the belly of Grainne and who was born into a life as bloodthirsty as his dad. There are wolves in this book - four footed and swift, and one at least is the friend of man. There is an old man, Cromlach, who is planning great things and to whom will fall many hard tasks.

There are quite a few novels that deal with Celtic themes -

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